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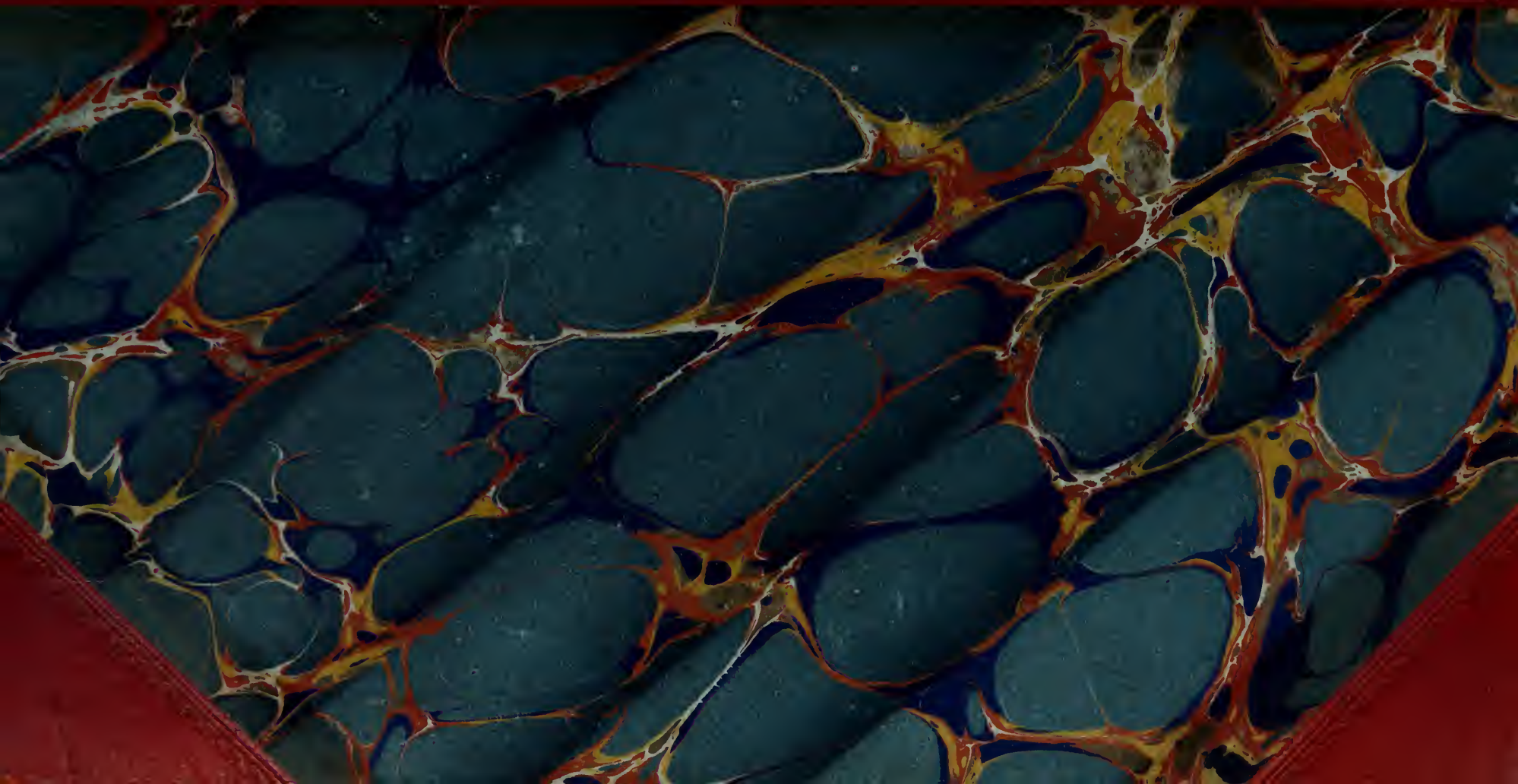

BUT SO DAINTILY DID ALICE FINGER THE PRICKLY STEMS, THAT SHE GATHERED ONE ROSE AFTER ANOTHER WITHOUT HURTING HERSELF.

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE

ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

CHARLES W. WOOD.

VOLUME LV.

January to June, 1893.

RICHARD BENTLEY & SON,
8, NEW BURLINGTON STREET, LONDON, W.
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

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LONDON:
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STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

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CONTENTS.

THE ENGAGEMENT OF SUSAN CHASE. By Mrs. HENRY WOOD, Author of "East Lynne."

PAGE

Chap. I. Lieutenant Carnagie 1
II. The Twenty-ninth of May 8
III. A Consultation 89
IV. The Pines 92
V. At Cross Purposes. 98
VI. Mr. Leicester 177
VII. The End of an Ill-starred Visit 185
VIII. Home at Last 265
IX. Frances Maitland's Anger 272

MR. WARRENNE: MEDICAL PRACTITIONER. With Illustrations by M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

Introduction 54
Chap. I. The Warrennes at Home 56
II. In the Shrubbery 59
III. The Last Night 65
IV. Strawberries and Cream. 69
V. A New Life. 130
VI. A Blotted Letter 135
VII. At the Ferns 140
VIII. A Morning Call 146
IX. A Ruined Glove 237
X. Music and Dancing 243
XI. In Vain 250
XII. On the Sick List 320
XIII. The Storm 327
XIV. Divided Interests 332
XV. Mrs. Digby of Forrel Court 338
XVI. At the Opera 353
XVII. Sir Frederic. 364
XVIII. Syrens 371
XIX. At Lady Jane's 441
XX. New Ties 446
XXI. "A Little Mistake" 451
XXII. Captain Scudamore 459

IN THE LOTUS LAND. By CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S. With Illustrations 29, 211, 298, 490

Adopted Child, An 395
Adrienne Le Couvreur. By C. E. MEETKERKE 106
Artist's Romance, An 77
Artist's Vision, An. By J. NEWTON-ROBINSON 163
Blighted Life, A 537
Caliphs, The Tombs of the. By CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S. . 29
Charlotte Corday. By ALICE KING 464
Conversation. By A. H. JAPP, LL.D. 282
Curse of Conder, The. By ELLEN THORNYCROFT FOWLER . . 435
Dangerous Experiment, A 516

PAGE
In the Hour of Need 257
"Kensington Minor." By GILBERT H. PAGE 345
Links and Chains 470
Lost Ideal, The 84
Major's Astral Body, The. By G. B. STUART 419
Mosque of Hassan. By CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S. . . . 298
Mosques of Cairo, The. By CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S. . . 490
Mrs. Janz' Jar 194
Of Giving. By A. H. JAPP, LL.D. 378
Of Using what we Have. By A. H. JAPP, LL.D. 488
Old French Medicine Woman, An. By MARY NEGREPONTE . . 532
On Vanity. By A. H. JAPP, LL.D. 192
Osman: An Interlude. By CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S. . . 211
Our Prisons and their Inmates 156
Paolo's Model. By PAULINE W. ROSSE 285
Presentiment 171
Story of a Wandering Crown, The 234
Strange Story of our Villa, The. By M. E. PENN 18
Strega's Curse, The. By LADY MARGARET MAJENDIE . . . 542
Thomas Parr. By E. A. KING 430
Travelling with Half a Million 113
Xanthi. A Legend of the Isles of Greece. By F. M. F. SKENE . 380

POETRY.

The Birth of Roses. By FANNY ROCHAT 17
Misjudged. By ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO 28
Sonnet 105
To an Albatross. By MATT HYLAND 112
"Beside the Dying Embers." By WILLIAM TOYNBEE . . . 155
Cantata. By C. E. MEETKERKE 233
Answered. By WILLIAM TOYNBEE 256
The Dead Children. By C. E. MEETKERKE 319
Voyage of the 'Pelican.' By EMMA RHODES. 393
Only a Dream. By C. E. MEETKERKE. 418
Coming Home. By C. E. MEETKERKE 469
Grandmother's Ways. By ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO . . . 536
Man's Remonstrance, A. By ALEXANDRE LAMONT . . . 564

ILLUSTRATIONS.

By M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

"But so daintily did Alice finger the prickly stems, that she gathered one rose after another without hurting herself."

"'Let me present you,' said Mrs. Creswick; and the ceremony was performed."

"'Now then, have you any pencils to be cut?' said Courtenay, throwing himself on the bank by Maud's side."

"The door flew open and Mrs. Thorne hurried into the room."

"'Why, it is yourself!' exclaimed Sir Frederic."

"She coloured the brightest crimson and drew her hand hastily away."

"Grandmother's Ways."

Illustrations to "In the Lotus Land."

THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY, 1893.

THE ENGAGEMENT OF SUSAN CHASE.

By Mrs. Henry Wood, author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER I.

LIEUTENANT CARNAGIE.

A LADY and gentleman were pacing a covered walk one dull day in November. Both were young: he had something of a military air about him; a tall, thin man, very dark. She was fair, with a calm face and pleasant expression. Just now, however, her features were glowing with animation, her cheeks burning, and her eyes cast down; for he, Charles Carnagie, had been telling her that he loved her; and she would rather have his love than that of the whole world beside.

Lieutenant Carnagie had come on a visit in the neighbourhood. He had accidentally met with Susan Chase the very first day of his arrival, and he had contrived to meet her pretty nearly every day since, now some weeks, so that love had grown up between them. A gossiping letter, received that morning from a brother officer, spoke of a rumour that their regiment was about to be ordered to the West Indies: and this had caused him to speak out.

"You know, Susan," he said, "I cannot go without you."

A deeper blush still, then a troubled expression, and she half raised her eyes. "Mamma will not consent to that; she will say I am too young."

"Susan——" laughed Mr. Carnagie.

"Yes. Well?" for he seemed to have found some source of amusement, and laughed still.

"Do you remember the other evening, when the Maitlands came to tea, and the conversation turned on marriage, your mamma informed us she was married at seventeen. You are eighteen, so she cannot consistently bring forward your youth as an objection."

"Yes; but she also said that early marriages were——"

"That early marriages were the incarnation of imprudence and impropriety," interruped Mr. Carnagie, "laying the foundation for all the disasters that flesh is heir to; from an unconscionable share of children, to a ruined pocket and wretched health. My dearest Susan, we will risk them all, and cite her own example when she holds out against us."

"Look at the rain!" suddenly exclaimed Miss Chase, as they came to an opening in the trees. "How long can it have begun?"

"It's coming down pretty smartly too. There are worse misfortunes at sea, Susan. We can turn back again, and wait its pleasure. You are under shelter here."

"But indeed I dare not stay longer. I wonder what the time is. Will you look, please?"

Mr. Carnagie took out his watch. "It is on the stroke of twelve."

"Twelve!" she exclaimed, in astonishment. "*Twelve!* Charles, we have been here an hour and a half. What will mamma say?"

"Nothing. When she hears what we have to tell her."

"Oh, Charles! I only went out to take a message to the cottage. And she knows I might have been back in ten minutes. Indeed I must hasten in."

He opened his umbrella, which he had brought with him, for rain had been threatening all the morning; and, causing her to take his arm, held it over her. She walked timidly: it was the first time she had ever taken it: and the moment they came within view of the house, she relinquished it.

"Susan, what's that for?"

"Don't you see mamma at the window?" she faltered.

"Yes; and I see that she is looking at us. Come, Susan, take courage; a few minutes more, and she will know that it is all as it should be."

Mr. Carnagie took possession of her hand, intending to make it again a prisoner; but Susan drew it away, and hurried off in the rain, leaving him and his umbrella to follow at leisure.

She bounded into the hall, out of breath. Her mother came and met her. Mr. Carnagie was not far behind.

"Susan, where ever have you been?" exclaimed Mrs. Chase, motioning her into the sitting-room. "What has detained you?"

Of course she had no excuse to offer, and she murmured something unintelligible; Mrs. Chase only caught the word "rain."

"Rain! you could not have waited for that. It has only just commenced. Where is it that you have been, Susan?"

"I believe I detained her, Mrs. Chase," spoke up young Carnagie. "I was coming here, and met her, and we have been walking in the covered walk."

Politeness kept Mrs. Chase silent. But she did not allow her daughters to walk with young men, either in covered walks or uncovered, and she mentally prepared a lecture for Susan.

"Susan has been making me a promise," resumed Mr. Carnagie, folding and unfolding a piece of paper, which he took up from the table.

"Not to go out walking with you again, I hope," hastily interposed Mrs. Chase. "For I cannot sanction it."

"Not precisely that. Mrs. Chase, she has promised to be my wife.

Mrs. Chase was taken entirely by surprise. A chest complaint, from which she suffered constantly, caused her to be much confined at home, rarely, if ever, to accompany her daughters in their walks or evening visits; therefore she had seen little of the progress of the intimacy. Susan sat down on the sofa, and drooped her face, and nervously played with her bonnet strings.

"Conditionally, of course," added Mr. Carnagie, "that you have no objection to offer. I trust you will have none, Mrs. Chase."

"Dear me! this is very sudden," was all that lady could find to utter aloud.

"My family—I believe you know—are of great respectability; and I possess a few thousands besides my commission. I will try to make her happy, Mrs. Chase."

"I have heard you highly spoken of by Sir Arthur, Mr. Carnagie. But still—you must allow me to consider this seriously, before giving a final answer."

"Oh, certainly. I did not expect anything more. If you will kindly not take too much time," he added, "for I believe there will be little time to spare."

"I do not understand you," said Mrs. Chase.

"I had a letter from Drake, of ours, this morning, and he tells me there's a rumour that we are to be sent off to the West Indies."

"And you wish for an answer before you leave. That is natural. You shall have it."

"My dear Mrs. Chase—I wish for *her* before I leave. I must take her with me."

"Take—are you speaking of Susan?" uttered the astonished Mrs. Chase.

"Of course I am. Several of our officers are married men, and their wives will accompany them out."

"If Susan were older I would not say you nay: only three or four years older."

"I cannot go without Susan. I never could endure to leave her behind me, with nothing more binding between us than an engagement: I might have to stop out there for years, before I could get leave to come home and claim her. Dear Mrs. Chase, if you are satisfied with me in other respects, you must give your consent to our being married at once."

"Mr. Carnagie! Do you know Susan's age?"

"Yes. Eighteen. And you," he added, with a half smile, "were seventeen when you married. I heard you say so."

Mrs. Chase looked vexed. "True; that was my age," she answered: "and it is that very fact which has set me against early marriages for my children. They are a great mistake.—Susan, where are you going? Stay and hear what I have to say: it is now fitting that you should do so. Sit down again. I have scarcely enjoyed a day's peace since I married, Mr. Carnagie. I had many children, and have had nothing but worry, noise, bustle, toil! Oh, you don't know the discomfort of early marriages: and I almost made a vow that my daughters should not marry until they were of a proper age."

"May I inquire what you would call a proper age?" he asked, suppressing a smile.

"Well—I think the most proper and the best age would be about five-and-twenty. But certainly not until twenty was turned."

"Susan wants only two years of twenty. Dear Mrs. Chase, I must plead that you change your resolution in her case. Were I stationary in England, and could occasionally see her, it might be different. I must take her with me."

"You are not yet sure of going."

"No, I am not. Drake thought——"

"We will not discuss it further for the present," interrupted Mrs. Chase. "You have nearly startled me out of my sober sense and judgment."

"Very well. May I come in to-morrow morning?"

"If you like. I will then say yes, or no, to the engagement: but without reference to the marriage."

"Now mind, Susan," he snatched a moment to whisper, "if your mother still holds out, and vows we must wait an indefinite number of years, we will not wait at all, but just elope, and settle it that way. It's most unreasonable of her. I can't wait for you, and I won't."

Susan smiled faintly. She was not one of the eloping sort.

The next morning came. Mrs. Chase had resolved to accept Mr. Carnagie, finding that Susan's "mind," as she called it, was set upon him; and indeed there was no reason why she should not accept him: but when Mr. Carnagie came, she found there was something else to be settled. He had received a summons to join his regiment, which was then quartered in Ireland, and also a positive, though not official notification, that it was ordered to the West Indies, and would be away in two months. Now, was Susan to go with him or not? Mrs. Chase said no, he said yes: and after much argument on both sides, and some slight indication of relenting on hers, they somehow came to the conclusion that Susan herself should decide the matter.

"My dear, decide *prudently*," cried Mrs. Chase. "Think well over all the fatal objections I have pointed out. Prudence, mind!"

"Susan, my darling, decide bravely," cried he; "don't be afraid. Think how happy we shall be together!"

And poor Susan, amidst a rush of colour and a flood of tears, decided TO GO.

"Oh, dear!" groaned Mrs. Chase, "there will be no time to prepare you a suitable trousseau, Susan."

"No time!" echoed Mr. Carnagie. "I could get an outfit made and packed in three days, and Susan has twice as many weeks. I should think she might buy up half the shops in Great Britain, in that time."

Mr. Carnagie made the best of his way to Ireland, and Susan made the best use of her hands and energies in preparing for her change of prospects. In seven weeks they were to be married, and in eight to sail. Mr. Carnagie had interest with his colonel, and had no doubt of obtaining another short leave of absence. During this time Mrs. Chase had Susan's miniature taken—to console them, she said, when Susan should be gone. It was a good likeness, but it flattered her. Susan wrote a merry account of this to Mr. Carnagie.

One day, when Susan's friend, Frances Maitland, had came in to help her with some delicate work, she began speaking of the disposition of Mr. Carnagie.

"Susan, tell me: do you believe he is, on the whole, calculated to make you happy?"

"Is there any reason why he should not be?" was Susan's answer.

"He is so fearfully passionate."

"Who says so?" demanded Susan, in tones of resentment.

"Oh, he is. Ask the Ashleys. There was something up about a dog. It was when Charles Carnagie was stopping there. He completely lost all self-control, and rushed to his room for his sword. Bessy met him on the stairs; he was brandishing it, and looking like a madman. She says there was an awful scene. Arthur declares he never before saw so violent a temper."

"Charles must have been greatly provoked," remarked Susan.

"He provoked himself, I believe. However, Susy, it is your own affair. I'm sure I don't want to set you against him. Marriage is a lottery at the best: 'for richer for poorer, for better for worse.' You will soon have to say that, you know."

Susan Chase had not soon to say it. The time of the wedding drew on, and on the day previous to that fixed for it, Lieutenant Carnagie arrived at Stopton, having obtained his leave of absence. Mrs. Chase's house was at some distance from it, but it was a fine, frosty morning, and he set out to walk.

He had come nearly in view of the house when he met a funeral. It startled Mr. Carnagie considerably, for surely it had come from the very house he was bound to. There were only some half-dozen cottages besides, that the road led to, just there, and that style of funeral was not likely to come from a cottage. He vaulted over a gate by the roadside, and peeped at it through the hedge; a hearse and several carriages. When it had passed, he came forth again, leaned over the gate, and gazed after it. Some children drew near, slowly following the sight in awe, gazers like himself.

"Who is dead?" he inquired of them. "Who is it that is being taken to the churchyard?"

"Mrs. Chase, sir."

"Mrs. Chase!" he uttered, horror-stricken. "What did she die of?"

The children did not know. Only that "she had died because she was ill."

"Can you inform me what Mrs. Chase died of?" the young officer repeated, for a woman now came up. "Was it any accident?"

"No, sir, no accident. She has been ailing a long time, some years, and she got suddenly worse at the last, and died," was the woman's answer, who evidently did not know Mr. Carnagie. "It was so quick, that her sons did not get here in time to see her, nor the little miss that was at school."

He was terribly shocked, scarcely able to believe it.

"When did she die?"

"On Tuesday, sir. Four days ago."

"Are they not burying her very soon?"

"Well, sir, the funeral was first fixed for to-morrow—I know all about it, you see, because I have been in there, since, helping the servants. But to-morrow, Saturday, was to have been Miss Susan Chase's wedding-day, and I believe she couldn't bear the idea, poor thing! of the funeral's taking place on it—what was to have been so different. Then the next day was Sunday, and some of the family did not like that day, and one of the sons was obliged to be back at his college on Monday. So they settled it for to-day."

Stunned with the news, Mr. Carnagie turned back. There seemed an indelicacy in his going to the house at that moment, and he waited till the after part of the day, and went then. A servant showed him into a darkened room, and Susan came to him.

He thought she would have cried herself ill. Her emotion was pitiable. He clasped her in his arms, and she lay there and sobbed, almost hysterically, as a child cries. She could give him very little more information than had previously been imparted. Their dear mother's complaint had taken an unfavourable turn, and had carried her off, almost without warning. One of her brothers, Susan said, had written to him on the Tuesday night, after it happened. Mr. Carnagie had left Ireland before the letter got there.

"Susan," he whispered, when she was a little calmer, "must this entail a separation on us?"

She looked as him, scarcely understanding.

"Must we wait? Must I sail without you?"

"Charles, that is almost a cruel question," she said at length. "How could you ask it? Would you have me marry you before my mother is cold in her grave? A year, at any rate, must pass over."

"It may be much longer than that. I shall not get leave so readily again. Oh, Susan! this is a hard trial."

"It is the will of God," she sighed, "and we must bear it."

"I shall not bear it patiently. I shall get marrying one of the copper, half-caste natives, out of defiance, or something as desperate. Fancy what it will be—condemned to vegetate by myself in that stifling climate, and you some millions of miles away!"

Susan was silent, pained at the tone of the remark. At that moment a girl of fifteen opened the door and looked in; wearing deep mourning, like herself.

"Come in, Emma, darling," she fondly said, drawing her sister towards her. "This is Mr. Carnagie, who was to have been so nearly related to us to-morrow. Charles," she added, "were there no other reason, I must have stayed to protect this child. My mother specially bequeathed her to me."

Emma Chase, who bore a resemblance to her sister Susan, felt a restraint in this stranger's presence, and she quickly and silently withdrew.

"Well, this is a gloomy prospect for us, Susan," resumed Mr. Carnagie, who could not get over his disappointment. "What I say is no mere joke—that it may be years before I can come to fetch you."

She raised her eyes to his, in all the expression of their trusting confidence. "No matter how many, Charles, you will find me waiting for you."

"But it is hard, for all that."

"Do you think—pray forgive me if I suggest anything wrong, or unpleasing—that if you were to return at once to your duty, without taking the leave granted you now (excepting the time occupied in travelling, which cannot be avoided), that they would be more inclined to allow it you when you next ask for it? It is an idea that has occurred to me."

"Perhaps so. It is not a bad notion. But, Susan, I would rather spend it with you."

"We are so sad just now," she murmured; "all the house is sad."

There was something in her tone which seemed to convey an intimation that his presence might not be acceptable to that house of sorrow; or at least Mr. Carnagie fancied so. And he did think her suggestion of going back to his duty a good one.

"Then, Susan, I think I had better make up my mind to leave you, and start back this very night."

"It may be better," she answered, the tears standing in her eyes.

"And in another year, my darling, if all's well, I trust I shall come and claim you."

"I trust so," she whispered.

He had in his pocket her wedding-ring, which he had bought as he came through Liverpool, and he drew it forth, and slipped it on to her finger—on the finger he ought to have slipped it on, in church, on the morrow. "There, Susan; now that binds you to me. Let it remain there till—until I take it off only to put it on again."

"Not on that finger," she remonstrated, her pale cheek flushing.

"Why not?"

"Strangers will think that I am married."

"And in one sense you are so, for we are married in heart. Let it remain there for my sake."

"Very well," she murmured.

"Susan, I must now ask something else. The miniature that was taken of you."

Susan hesitated. It was still in her mother's room, in what she used to call her "treasure drawer."

"I was to have had the original, and they the likeness," he said; "but now that the original will be left at home, I may surely take the miniature. Let me have it, Susan."

She went and fetched it.

"And now I will bid you farewell, for if I am to go, I must start at once," he said, straining her to him. "God bless you, my love! my darling wife that was to have been! Be true to me, Susan, as I will be true to you."

He departed. But he did not return to his duty, as they had agreed. He meant to do so, but he returned by way of London, and the attractions of the capital proved too much for his resolution. In due course, he departed with his regiment for Barbadoes: and poor Susan Chase remained at home, to pine after him, and to wear the plain gold ring he had placed on her finger.

CHAPTER II.

THE TWENTY-NINTH OF MAY.

For three years they did not meet. Nay, it was more; for it was winter when he went, and early summer when he returned. Whether Mr. Carnagie had grown less anxious for his marriage, or that he really could not obtain leave, certain it is, that for three years and four months Susan did not see him. In his letters, he had pressed much that she should go out and marry him there, but her innate sense of delicacy spoke against it. This prolonged absence had told much on her spirits, somewhat on her health. Her marriage preparations had long been made.

May came in, and had nearly gone again. On the 29th of that month, Susan was seated before the breakfast-table, waiting for her sisters, Ursula and Emma. They were still in the same house: it belonged to their eldest brother, and he was unmarried and frequently away from it. The young ladies had their own small fortune, about one hundred pounds a year each.

The 29th of May was kept as a gala day in their village, and in all that part of the country. Service was read in the church, and a

procession walked to it, with banners, and gilded oak balls and branches. It is done away with now, for we are writing of many years ago.

"Is it not a lovely day for the holiday people?" exclaimed Ursula, as she entered, and took her seat opposite Susan. "You will have delightful weather for your journey."

Susan was going out on the day but one following, a short journey of forty miles. Their cousin Lucy was about to be married. Her mother was an invalid, confined to her chamber, and Susan was wanted to superintend everything.

Emma came dancing in, with her merry blue eyes, and her shining curls. She was of a careless, gay temperament, unlike her thoughtful sisters. "Susy, you look sad," was her salutation, "and every soul has some peculiar source of gratification to-day. Did you hear the laughing crowds going by, all the morning, to gather the oak balls?"

"What may be your peculiar source of gratification, Emma?" asked Ursula.

"The putting on my new blue dress. You don't know how well it becomes me. I shall win more hearts at church to-day than the parson."

"You are a vain girl, Emma."

"I think I am," was her laughing answer; "but where's the harm of it? Seriously speaking, Susan, were I you, if that lieutenant of mine did not advertise himself shortly, I should give him up. He is the origin of all your sad looks. I don't think he troubles himself to write often; it is four months since his last letter arrived."

"He may be on his way home," said Susan. "In that letter he stated that he was going to apply for leave."

"Then he might have written to say so, if he is coming. Unless —Susan, I should not wonder—unless he means to take you by surprise!"

Susan aroused herself from a painful reverie. "Yes," she said, "I think he must be on his way to us; I have thought so several times lately." And a happy flush mantled to her cheeks, and she unconsciously twirled the plain gold ring round and round her finger. It was a habit she had fallen into, when her mind was absent.

The day passed on to evening. Some young ladies had come in to spend it with them. Soon after the shutters were closed, and lights brought in, a sound, as of a post-chaise, was heard approaching the house. None seemed to take any heed of it; they were not thinking of Mr. Carnagie; Susan's heart alone beat wildly. *Had* he come?

The door opened, and a tall, gentlemanly man entered, All in the room rose, and he stood in indecision, looking from one to the other. So many young ladies! "It is Charles Carnagie!" cried Frances Maitland.

"My darling Susan!" he whispered, advancing to one of them,

and clasping her tenderly to him. "How thankful I am that we have met again!" But she blushed and smiled, and drew away from him. *It was Emma he had gone up to.*

Frances Maitland advanced. "You have made a mistake Charles.—Ah! I see you have not forgotten me, but never mind me, just now.—This is not Susan."

"Not Susan!" he uttered.

"Susan, why don't you come forward?" For poor Susan Chase had retreated back into the shade. All her heart's life seemed to die within her, when that embrace was given to another. "Susan, I say!"

Miss Maitland was positive in manner, dragged forth Susan, and brought her up to Mr. Carnagie. He took her hand with cold indecision; looked at her, and then looked at Emma.

"You are playing with me," he said. "That is Susan."

"No, indeed, I am Emma," returned that young lady, laughing, and shaking back her sunny ringlets. "But they all say I am exactly like what Susan used to be."

Mr. Carnagie recollected himself. "Susan," he whispered, scanning her features, "I think I begin to recognise you. But you are much altered. I beg your pardon for the mistake I made."

"I am Susan," she answered, raising her tearful eyes.

"Have you been ill?" he inquired. "You are pale and thin."

"No: I have been well. I believe I am thinner than when you went away."

"That comes of fretting," interposed Miss Maitland—"sighing and fretting after you, Charles Carnagie." And Susan blushed deeply, making her look a little more like her old self.

"How was it you never wrote to say you were coming?"

"I did write, just before I sailed, stating when I should leave."

"Then we never received the letter. We thought you still in Barbadoes."

Many times in the evening did Mr. Carnagie's eyes rove towards the blooming Emma. Scarcely could he persuade himself that she was not Susan. The miniature he had taken with him had been a handsome likeness of Susan; as Emma was now a handsome likeness of what Susan had been. The hair was of the same colour, dark auburn, dressed in the same style; and to make the illusion more complete, the dress, in the painting, was light blue. There sat Emma, in her new and handsome light-blue silk dress, her blushing cheeks, her flowing ringlets, and her ready smile; and there sat Susan, pale and subdued, her features less rounded than formerly, her hair now worn plain, and her dress, handsome certainly, but a sober brown. She had not cared to adorn herself in the absence of Mr. Carnagie.

The visitors departed, and he and Susan talked over preliminaries that night. Mr. Carnagie had business to do in town; "lots of

things;" some his own, some that he had undertaken for his brother officers; he might get it done in three weeks, four at the most: and he proposed that they should be married at once, and go to London together. But to marry so soon, with only a day or two's notice, would be inconvenient, almost unheard of, Susan said. Therefore the wedding was fixed for a month hence, when he should have completed his business, and they would then spend two or three months at a quiet watering-place.

The following morning they breakfasted later than usual, for when Mr. Carnagie, who had promised to breakfast with them, came, he drew Susan out with him into the garden, and began talking to her lovingly, as of old. So late did they sit down to breakfast, that the post came in before they had finished. Only one letter, and that for Susan. She opened it.

"It is from my aunt," she said, "urging me to be sure not to disappoint them, and to bring with me the pattern of a pretty spencer, if I happen to have one."

"How like my aunt that is!" laughed Ursula. "She is always on the look-out for patterns. I believe she must collect them or sell them. You will write to-day, Susan, and explain why you cannot go."

"But—I am thinking," hesitated Susan—"that I can go. Aunt, poor thing, is so helpless, and they have so depended on me. I believe I shall be able to go."

"If you could do so, it would be a charity," said Ursula; "for what my aunt will do without you, I cannot conceive. When do you leave for town, Mr. Carnagie?"

"As soon as I can," he answered; "some of my business is in a hurry. Not to-day, for I must give a look in at the Maitlands and other friends: and I have much to talk over yet with Susan. To-morrow I shall leave."

"And it is to-morrow morning that I ought to start," remarked Susan. "I do not see why I should not go. Ursula can superintend things here in my absence, and I shall be back again at the end of a fortnight."

"Mind that you are home in time, Susan," said Mr. Carnagie, with mock gravity.

"I will be sure to be back in time," she laughed. "But I think I ought to go."

She did go. And had to be at Stopton early the following morning to take the stage-coach. Some of the family went with her, and Mr. Carnagie. "You will have to start in half an hour after me," Susan remarked to him; "only you travel by a different route."

"I am not going to town to-day," he answered, "but to-morrow. I had no time to give to the Maitlands yesterday, and they expect me to spend to-day with them."

"Then I think I must say, Mind you are back in time," returned

Susan, jokingly. He took a fond farewell of her, and she departed on her journey.

Precisely to the day, at the end of the fortnight, Susan was at home again, arriving in the afternoon. One of the first persons she saw, as she entered the house, was Mr. Carnagie.

"Charles! You here!" she uttered, in astonishment. "Have you come down from London?"

"I have not been to London," was Mr. Carnagie's answer; "one thing or another has detained me here. The Maitlands teased me to stay, and I too readily yielded; then I began to reflect how much pleasanter it would be to have you in London with me. So I shall just make myself at ease till the happy day, and we will go there together."

There was something in these words displeasing to the ear of Susan. Stay; it was the tone in which they were spoken. It was pressingly eager: as if he were so anxious to justify himself. And never to have written to her!"

"You might have sent me a letter, Charles, all this while."

"In the first week, I did not care that you should know I had not left, for I was perpetually vowing to be off the next hour. And since then, I have been expecting you every day: Ursula thought you might come home before the fortnight was up."

"You might have mentioned, when you wrote to me, that Charles was here," said Susan, looking at her sister Ursula.

"Mr. Carnagie requested me not to do so."

"To surprise you, Susan," interrupted Mr. Carnagie.

Ursula had spoken gravely; he, eagerly; and Susan wondered. She retired to her own room, to remove her things, and in a few minutes Frances Maitland called, and went up to her.

"What a shame of you, Susy, to leave Charles Carnagie to his own disconsolate self!" was her unceremonious salutation. "And the instant he arrived here, after his three years' absence!"

"Nay," said Susan, "he first of all decided to leave me, and go up to town. When I left, I thought he was going also. I think I ought to reproach you, Frances, for having kept him. He says that the Maitlands teased him to remain, and he too readily yielded."

"He did not say so!"

"Yes, he did. He has just said so to me."

"Well, that's cool!" returned Frances Maitland. "I shall tell Mr. Charlie of that. If he has been three times in our house, since you left, it is as much as he has vouchsafed us of his society."

"Nonsense!" retorted Susan.

"It is quite true. I'll ask Charlie how much they charge to teach story-telling in Barbadoes."

"Do I understand that you have not seen Charles more than three times since I left home?" returned Miss Chase.

"There you go again, Susan; catching at words, and stumbling to

conclusions! I said he had not been more than three times inside our house. I have seen him dozens of times; for he has been perpetually about the grounds and in the park, with Emma. We have come upon them at all hours. Do you not think Emma looks funny?"

"I have not yet seen Emma," answered Susan. "What do you mean by funny?"

"She has become so shy and distant. If we only speak to her, she rushes away. I think Charles Carnagie has scared her out of her self-possession."

"You always were fanciful, Frances."

"And perhaps always shall be. You would have been better at home than away; at any rate, that's no fancy. I have come to ask you to spend this evening with us; and that's no fancy. You, your sisters, and Charles Carnagie."

"I am rather tired," answered Susan, "but I will come if the rest do."

"It is decided then, for I asked Ursula as I came in. Some of you can invite Charlie; I may not meet with him. Good-bye, until evening."

When Susan went down to the sitting-room, Ursula and Emma were there. "Let me look at you," she said to the latter, after kissing her fondly. "I want to have a good look at your face. Frances Maitland says you have become queer and shy, and that Charles has scared you out of your self-possession."

Susan had Emma before her, as she spoke, and she was astonished at the violent rush of crimson which her words called up. Face, neck, ears, were dyed with it. Not only this: Emma began to tremble, and then burst into tears, and ran from the room.

Susan could not speak from astonishment. She turned towards Ursula, and saw her looking on with a severe expression.

"What can have come to Emma?" faltered Susan. "I meant it only as a joke. Ursula, you look strange, too. The house altogether seems unlike itself. What can be the matter?"

Ursula did not answer. The scowl on her brow was very deep.

"Ursula, I ask you, what is it? You seem angry with me."

Ursula rose; she was tall and stout, and she threw her large arms round Susan, and whispered:

"Not with you, Susan dear. Oh no, not with you. My poor Susan!"

Susan began to tremble, almost as Emma had done. "There is some mystery," she breathed.

"Yes, something has occurred. I shrink from the task of telling you."

"Must you tell me? must I know it? I have been so full of peace and happiness of late."

"You must know it, I believe. I scarcely knew whether to tell you or not, and I took counsel of Frances Maitland, when she came

in just now, and she says I must do so. She was going to tell you herself, but I forbade her."

Susan sat down, somewhat reassured. She thought it might be only that something had gone wrong in the household: or perhaps the dressmaker had ruined the wedding-dresses. "Tell me at once, Ursula. Do not beat about the bush."

"You say I looked angry," said Ursula. "I am angry; with Emma. She has grown to love Charles Carnagie."

Susan turned white. She could not speak.

"Listen a moment, and you shall know as much as I do. After you left, Charles stayed on, sleeping at the inn, as before. I wondered, but of course it was not my business to send him away. He was much here; it was only natural that he should be. Then I noticed—it seemed to occur to my mind all in a moment—how much Emma was with him; out with him in the grounds at all times and all hours, and with him indoors. Well, Susan, I never attempted to check it, for it only seemed natural. Last night Frances Maitland ran in, at dusk, after their tea. I don't know what it was with you, but here it was a dull, dismal evening, almost foggy. 'When do you expect Susan home?' were her first words, without saying How d'ye do, or anything—but you know her abrupt manner. 'Probably to-morrow,' I answered. 'Well, it's time she came, that's all,' said she. 'I have seen what I don't like. I have suspected it some days, but I am sure of it now—that Emma is too intimate with Charles Carnagie.' Susan," added Ursula, "you might have knocked me down with a feather; and then it all rose up frightfully before me, their walking out together, and their whisperings indoors."

"How did she mean that they were too intimate?" faltered Susan. "What had she seen?"

"She would not say. She said she should only tell you. You had better ask her."

Susan leaned her head upon her hand. "Frances is very fanciful," was her remark, "and if once she takes an idea into her head, her imagination improves upon it."

"True. You must have it out with her, what she did see, and what she did not see. When Emma walked herself in, last night, it was almost dark; I said nothing to her. I fear she is too fond of him: it all looks like it. Of his sentiments I know nothing; but, since this occurred, I have wondered whether she was the attraction that kept him here."

How Susan bore with her anxiety until evening, when they went to the Maitlands, she scarcely knew. She drew Frances aside at once. "Ursula has told me," she whispered. "What was it you saw?"

"Only that she was clasped to Charles Carnagie's breast, crying and wailing, and he was kissing her."

"Oh, Frances! you surely never saw that!"

"I saw it. If it were the last word I ever spoke, I saw it," im-

pressively uttered Miss Maitland. "They were bemoaning their hard fate in his being bound to you. She sobbed out that her happiness was gone for ever, and he that he had never loved Susan half as passionately as he loved her. That is all I saw or heard, Susan; but that is pretty well."

"Where were they?"

"In the grove, by the large elm-tree at the turning. You know the bench."

Susan went into the drawing-room. The scene swam before her eyes; she answered questions at random; and when Mr. Carnagie spoke to her, she turned faint and sick. Outwardly he was attentive to her, but it was a forced attention. In the course of the evening, when some of the party were in the garden, Mr. Carnagie drew Emma away from the rest. Susan followed them: she believed it her duty: she was wretched, jealous, miserable. She saw them standing together in an attitude of the deepest affection, and she drew away again, more jealous and more wretched than before.

"What shall you do?—what will be your course?" Miss Maitland asked her.

"I know not—I know not," she answered, in tones of anguish. "Frances, pity me!—oh, that I could fly away somewhere, from it all, and find rest!"

Frances Maitland did pity her, little as she was given to pitying any one. "It will take Susan years to get over this," was her mental comment. "I wonder whether she will marry him."

When they left that night, Mr. Carnagie offered his arm to Susan. She thanked him, and said she had her dress to hold up. Yet short skirts were worn then. He went at once to Emma; she took it, and they lingered, whispering, behind Susan and Ursula. He left them at their door, and Susan shut herself into her chamber to think.

An hour afterwards, she entered Emma's room, who was then undressing. She said what she had to say; despair was in her low voice; no anger; yet Emma flung herself down on the floor, and screamed and sobbed in self-reproach.

"I could not help it—I could not help it," she shrieked forth. "That first moment, when he suddenly appeared, and clasped me in his embrace, drew my heart to him: and my love for him is as living fire. Why was I so like you? Why are you so changed? Half his time he calls me Susan: his love has not altered, he says, only that I am now what you were. To love you, as you are now, he must change the object of his mind's affection—and he cannot do it."

"Next to him, who was my second self, I have loved you," moaned Susan, as she sat on a low chair, and rocked herself to and fro. "I have cherished you as something more precious than self; I promised our mother to do so, on her death-bed: and this is my reward!"

It was a strange scene. Emma sobbing, and writhing on the carpet in her white dressing-gown. "I would not have brought this misery to us all purposely," she said, "and we never meant you to know it: I cannot think how it is you do know it. When once you and he have sailed, I shall sit down and hug my unhappiness, and I hope it will kill me, Susan; then you will be avenged."

"I would have sacrificed my life for you," whispered Susan; "I must now sacrifice what is far dearer. You must be the one to sail with him; not I."

"Susan! you never shall sacrifice yourself for me! I——"

"No more," interrupted Susan. "My resolution is taken, and I came to tell it you. I hope that time will be merciful to me: to us both."

Susan left the room as she spoke, and there stood Ursula.

"Susan, I heard you, in there; I almost hoped you were beating her. We must send her away to my aunt's to-morrow morning, until the wedding is over."

"Oh, Ursula," she wailed, in a tone of the deepest anguish, "can you not see what must be? The wedding must be hers, not mine: she must marry Mr. Carnagie."

"Give in to those two false ones!" uttered Ursula. "You never shall with my consent."

"For my own sake as much as hers," murmured Susan. "To marry him, when his love has openly left me, might be to enter on a life of reproach from him, certainly of coldness, possibly of neglect and cruelty. Ursula, that is more than I could bear. I will have one more interview with him, and then leave till they are gone. You must superintend what is required by Emma."

"What will the neighbours say?" wondered Ursula. And Susan shivered.

She held her interview with Mr. Carnagie the next morning, but what took place at it was never spoken of by either. Susan's face bore traces of many tears when she came out, and he looked more troubled and annoyed than he had ever looked before; holding the unfortunate gold ring between his fingers, in a dubious way, as if he did not know what to do with it. The chaise was at the door to convey her to Stopton, on her way to her aunt's, when, as she was stepping into it, Frances Maitland came racing down.

"What is all this rumour, Susan?" she demanded. "That you are going away, and that Emma is to marry Mr. Carnagie. I will not have such folly. I have come to stop it. The country will cry shame upon her and upon him. Lock her up, and keep her upon bread and water. You have sacrificed enough for her, I think, without sacrificing your husband."

"Say no more, Frances," was her only answer. "I cannot bear it."

She waved her adieu, and drove away with a breaking heart. Never to return home until long after Mr. Carnagie and Emma, his wife, had sailed for Barbadoes.

"No luck will attend them," was the comment of Frances Maitland.

(*To be continued.*)

THE BIRTH OF ROSES.

AN OLD LEGEND.

THERE she stood—a holy maiden, in the land of corn and wine,
In the lowly Bethlehem village terraced o'er with drooping vine:
Fig and olive spread their shadow, and the far-off cool sea breeze
Shook the sun's too ardent kisses from the fair pomegranate trees.
On the rounded hills and mountains, grateful for the dew and rain,
Grew the thyme for wild bees' honey—and the cattle grazed the plain,
While within the fruitful valleys lay the harvest's golden grain.

Stood this holy Christian maiden, 'mid a sea of faces stern—
Blamed for wrong and wholly slander'd, doomed on faggot pyre to burn.
Close behind the ruthless people, crouched the tender mother low,
Wond'ring at a faith so mighty that could change a maiden so!
Change her timid fawn-eyed daughter to this maiden without fear,
Mould her gentle dew-eyed darling to this maid without a tear;
Murm'ring only, "I am guiltless! Blessed Saviour Jesus, hear!"

"Fire the faggots! burn the sinner!" shout the angered people wild,
Still the calm sweet voice is pleading, "Saviour Jesus! save your child!"
In a moment, ere the hot breath of the fire touch'd her feet,
There up-rose a wondrous incense, than all flowers more passing sweet!
For each faggot that was scorching grew a rose branch—rosy red,
And each brand that 'scaped the burning, snowy blossoms bore instead.
It is thus the Birth of Roses happened years ago, 'tis said.

FANNY ROCHAT.

THE STRANGE STORY OF OUR VILLA.

By M. E. Penn.

"'VILLA de l'Orient, Avenue des Citronniers, Nice'—really, our address looks uncommonly well at the head of a letter," remarked Mrs. Brandon, contemplating, with her head on one side, the effect of the words she had just written.

"It really does," we agreed in chorus. We always agreed with Mrs. Brandon; it saved trouble.

We were three "lone-lorn" females—two spinsters and a widow—who had agreed to share a house—or, rather, part of a house, for we occupied but one story—at Nice for the winter.

First there was Mrs. Brandon—our chaperon, housekeeper, and directress in chief—tall, blonde, majestic, with a calm, suave manner, and a quietly distinct voice, which always made itself heard and obeyed; then came Miss Lucy Lester, a plump, good-tempered little lady of a certain age, with a round, smiling face, kindly blue eyes, and not an angle about her, either moral or physical. Lastly there was the present writer, who modestly prefers to leave her portrait to the reader's imagination, trusting that he will paint it in the most attractive colours at his disposal.

The supplementary members of the party were Mrs. Brandon's daughter Georgie, an over-grown school-girl of thirteen; Georgie's inseparable companion, "Chum," a small, sharp, and extremely impudent fox-terrier; and Joséphine, our stout French *bonne*, who inhabited a microscopic kitchen, which her capacious person entirely filled.

In spite of its name there was nothing in the least Oriental about the appearance of "our villa." It was simply a good-sized, square, pink-and-white house, looking, Georgie said, as if it were built of *nougat*, with green balconies and shutters, and a semi-circular flight of steps to the front door. It stood in the midst of an extensive garden, planted with orange and lemon trees, and sheltered on one side by a rocky hill, which rose above it, sheer and straight, like a natural wall. At the end of the garden was a rustic bench, sheltered by a gnarled old olive-tree.

The house was furnished with remarkable taste. The house-agent, through whom we took our *appartement*, informed us that the landlord, M. de Valeyre—a gentleman of good birth, though not of large means, who was now on a shooting tour in Corsica—had spent many years of his life in the East, and our rooms contained not a few souvenirs of his travels in the shape of ornaments, rugs, and

draperies, to say nothing of his own clever oil-sketches of Oriental life and scenery which adorned the walls.

The rooms, though decidedly small, were bright and airy, and the outlook on the garden, where the oranges were ripening under their glossy leaves, delightful. Altogether we felt we might congratulate ourselves on our good fortune.

"Yes," proceeded our "chief," glancing complacently around her—we were sitting in the dining-room after lunch on the third day of our arrival—"it is really a *trouvaille*. So charmingly situated, so well furnished, and so cheap! We might have looked all over Nice and found nothing to suit us so well."

"We might, indeed," assented Lucy Lester, who generally echoed the last speaker. "One could wish, perhaps, that the bedrooms were a little larger——"

"And that they did not open one out of the other like a nest of boxes, of which mine is the inside box," I ventured to add.

Mrs. Brandon glanced at me austerely over her eyeglass.

"If we, whom you disturb by passing through our rooms, do not object to that, I think *you* need not," she observed reprovingly.

"But it seems you do object," I returned. "Every morning I am greeted with anathemas 'not loud, but deep,' half smothered under the bed-clothes."

"Why will you persist in getting up at such unearthly hours, waking people out of their beauty sleep?"

"I don't mind that," put in Georgie, who was teaching Chum to balance a pencil on his nose; "but I do wish the woman upstairs would not make such a noise at night; I can't go to sleep for her. The ceilings are so thin, one hears every sound."

"The woman upstairs?" her mother repeated. "What do you mean, child? There is no one in the house but ourselves. The upper stories and the ground floor are unlet."

"There is some one in the room above mine all the same," Georgie persisted. "She keeps me awake by walking about overhead, sometimes muttering and laughing to herself, and sometimes sobbing as if her heart would break. Last night I stood up on the bed and rapped the ceiling with my umbrella to silence her, but she kept on all the same. Chum heard her too—didn't you, sir?"

Chum, glad of any interruption to his lesson, barked an emphatic assent.

"Well, now, that is very strange," Miss Lester remarked, dropping her knitting. "I have fancied, myself, do you know, that I heard some one moving about, overhead; not only at night, but in the daytime."

"Perhaps there is some servant or caretaker left in charge of the rooms," Mrs. Brandon said after a pause; "I will ask M. Gillet when next I see him."

We saw M. Gillet, the house-agent, the following day. He called,

as he explained politely, to ask after the health of "these ladies," and to ascertain if we were satisfied with our "installation."

He was a round, fat, oily man of middle age, with a bland manner and a propitiatory smile.

"We are quite well and perfectly satisfied," Mrs. Brandon replied graciously, answering for us all, as usual. "But I thought you told us, M. Gillet, that the upstairs rooms were unoccupied?"

"So they are, madame. There is no one in the house but yourselves and your servant."

"Then who is it my daughter hears at night in the room above hers?" He raised his eyebrows, glancing inquiringly at Georgie.

"I hear a woman walking about and talking to herself," she explained. "I can't understand what she says; it is not French."

"Ah!" His face changed from smiling incredulity to startled gravity. He drew in his lips and looked perturbed.

"It must be Madame de Valeyre," he muttered; "it can be no one else. Just like her to turn up again in this mysterious fashion without a word of warning! Monsieur will be furious when he knows she is here, and I shall certainly think it my duty to inform him at once."

"Are you speaking of our landlord's wife?" I inquired. He assented.

"But why should he be displeased? Has she not a right to occupy her own house?"

"Well—no—that is just it. When they separated by mutual consent a year ago it was expressly stipulated, as a condition of his making her an allowance, that she should not return here, or in any way molest him. I had it from his own lips."

"Why did they separate?" Miss Lester inquired, curiously.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"'Incompatibility of temper' was the reason given, but, of course, there were others. The fact is, it was one of those madly romantic marriages which never do turn out well—except in novels. She was an Arab girl whom he picked up somewhere in Algeria, and insisted on marrying, to the scandal of his family and friends—that is her portrait," he added, nodding towards a picture on the wall; "painted by Monsieur himself, soon after his marriage."

We looked with interest at the canvas; a slight but clever oil-sketch of a young Arab girl, with an oval olive-tinted face of striking beauty, and strange passionate dark eyes with a smouldering fire in their depths. Under it was written "Ayesha," and a date.

"Yes, she was handsome, then," he admitted, in answer to our comments, "but half a savage, and more than half a heathen, though supposed to have been converted. I heard that in the early days of their marriage she spent most of her time concocting charms and potions 'to keep her husband's love.' Apparently they were not the right sort," he added drily; "he soon wearied of her; then there were

scenes, tears, upbraidings. Madame was jealous—(with cause, if report spoke truly); Monsieur had a temper—*enfin*, no one was surprised when, just a year ago, M. de Valeyre announced that they had separated by mutual consent, and that Madame had returned to her friends. Since then he has been travelling, and no doubt is much happier without her."

"While she, poor soul, is fretting her heart out," Mrs. Brandon put in; "though I have no doubt he was a brute to her."

The agent shrugged his shoulders with a deprecating smile.

"There were faults on both sides, Madame; but it was hardly possible for any man to live in peace with such a *toquée* as she is."

"*Toquée?*" Mrs. Brandon repeated; "do you mean that she is mad? If so, it is certainly not pleasant to have her in the house."

"*Mais non, Madame!*" he protested; "she is not mad; only eccentric, erratic, capricious. Her returning in this mysterious way is a proof of it. Of course I have no right to interfere with her, but I shall certainly let M. de Valeyre know at once that she is here. You must not be subjected to this annoyance."

After a few more words he took his leave.

The days that followed were fully and pleasantly occupied in exploring Nice and its environs, which were new to all of us. We sunned ourselves on the Promenade des Anglais; drove on the Cornice Road; heard the band in the Jardin Public, and loitered among the tempting shops on the Place Masséna; all in due course. The weather was glorious. Sunny days and moonlit nights succeeded each other in uninterrupted splendour, and made it difficult for us to believe that we were actually within a few weeks of Christmas.

The presence of the mysterious Madame de Valeyre in the house was no longer a matter of doubt. Not only had we all heard her restless footsteps overhead, and the unintelligible muttering which sounded so strangely uncanny, but more than once we had caught sight of her—a tall slender figure clad in a loose white wrapper—pacing to and fro in the shadowy garden alleys, or sitting on the bench under the gnarled old olive-tree. Once, at dusk, I met her on the stair-case flitting silently upstairs to her own lonely rooms, but she passed me quickly without returning my salutation, or even glancing at me.

"*C'est drôle!*" Joséphine often remarked; "to shut herself up like that, without even a servant. And how does she get her food? she never seems to go beyond the gates."

We agreed that it *was* "drôle," but did not trouble ourselves greatly about the matter, having more interesting occupation for our thoughts.

One evening, in the third week of our tenancy, the others were gone to the theatre, and I, pleading letters to write, had remained at home with no companion but "Chum," having given Joséphine permission to go out.

Chum, by the way, was the only one of the party who did not appear to like his winter quarters. He had not been in his usual rude health and spirits since we came to the Villa, but seemed restless and depressed. Even now, as he lay curled up on my gown, he could not sleep quietly, but kept waking up with a start and a shiver, looking uneasily about him.

I sat in the dining-room, out of which the other rooms opened. To the right was the curtained doorway (doors there were none) of the *salon*—to the left, that which admitted to Mrs. Brandon's bed-room, leading out of which was Miss Lester's. The dressing-room of the latter had been converted into a bed-room for Georgie, and the last of the suite was my own chamber.

The evening was warm and very still. Glancing through the open window, which was shaded by a tall eucalyptus, I caught a glimpse of a sky full of stars, and over the tree-tops a line of tremulous silver showed where the sea lay sleeping.

As I lowered my head to my writing again, my eye was arrested by a slight movement of the *portière* which screened the drawing-room doorway. I looked up quickly, but seeing nothing unusual, concluded I had been mistaken. I was writing busily again, when the dog stirred uneasily, growled, then suddenly sprang to his feet, gazing, with dilated eyes and ears erect, towards the door. As I involuntarily looked again in the same direction, I was startled to see a hand, the long slender hand of a woman, put forth from within to draw the curtain back. For a moment it remained motionless, grasping the *portière*, and I had time to note every detail of its form and colour; the fine but dusky skin, the delicate taper fingers, on one of which gleamed a quaint snake-shaped gold ring. Then the curtain was abruptly withdrawn, and a figure appeared in the opening: a tall, slender woman, enveloped in a loose wrapper of some gauzy Algerian stuff.

It was Madame de Valeyre. I had never had a full view of her face before, but I recognised her at once as the original of the portrait: thinner, older, with a wild and troubled look in her lovely dark eyes, but the same.

Too startled to speak, I stared at her, and she looked back as silently and as fixedly at me. Then, before I could rise or address her, my strange visitor crossed the room with a calm and leisurely step, and passed through the opposite doorway.

Recovering from my surprise, I caught up the lamp and followed her. She had already traversed Mrs. Brandon's bedroom, and was passing into the one beyond.

"Pardon, Madame——" I called after her; but she neither paused nor turned till she reached the threshold of my own room, the inner one of the suite.

Drawing back the *portière* with one hand, she looked at me over her shoulder—a look that thrilled me, so earnest it was, so imperious, so fraught with meaning to which I had not the clue—but uttered

not a word. Then she passed in, and the heavy curtain dropped behind her.

In a second's space I had followed her into the room.

To my utter astonishment she was not there. I looked round blankly, raising the lamp above my head. There was no other door but that by which she had entered; no closet, no cupboard, no recess in which she could be concealed. And yet she was gone, vanished, it seemed, into thin air. For a moment I stood, looking about me in utter bewilderment; then a sort of panic seized me—an irrational fear of I knew not what or whom.

I hurried back through the empty and silent rooms, not daring to cast a glance behind me; and feeling a sudden distaste for the dining-room, took refuge in the tiny kitchen, where I sat with Chum on my lap, starting nervously at every sound, till the others returned.

I had decided to say nothing of what had occurred to Miss Lester or Georgie, lest it should alarm them, but Mrs. Brandon I must tell, for the relief of my own mind, though I hardly expected she would believe my story. In fact it seemed, even to myself, so incredible that I could well excuse her scepticism.

It was as I anticipated. She heard me out with a look of mingled astonishment and incredulity.

"My dear Edith," she said when I had finished; "excuse me, but —are you quite sure you did not fall asleep and dream all this?"

"I am quite sure that I was as wide awake then as I am now."

"But it is so utterly unaccountable," she objected; "not only her disappearance, but her appearance. How did she get into the drawing-room in the first instance? She was not there when we went out I am certain, and she could not have entered it afterwards without your seeing her. Why did you not ask her what she wanted—what she meant by it?"

"I was too startled at first, and when I recovered myself she had vanished."

"Well, I hope I shall encounter her myself," Mrs. Brandon remarked resolutely; "she shall not 'vanish' again till she has explained the matter, I promise you. We can't have her prowling about our rooms like a Banshee."

But the days passed on, and we caught no further glimpse of Madame de Valeyre.

* * * * *

It was the last day of the old year—a day so brilliant, so warm, serene, and sunny, that it would not have disgraced an English mid-summer. Long after Georgie had retired for the night, we three elders sat round the handful of wood fire which we kept in more for the sake of cheerfulness than warmth, talking of old times, old friends and old scenes, in that retrospective mood which falls on most of us at such seasons.

"I wonder if that poor woman upstairs will have any one to wish

her '*Bonne Année*' to-morrow?" Miss Lester remarked during a pause in the conversation. "Fancy how *triste* to be spending New Year's Eve alone! I thought I heard her crying just now."

We listened, and sure enough a sound of suppressed sobbing, inexpressibly sad and forlorn, reached us from the room above.

"Poor soul!" Mrs. Brandon exclaimed compassionately. "I feel strongly inclined to go upstairs and see if there is anything I can do to help or comfort her, but there is no knowing how she might take it. She is evidently more than a little *toquée*, as M. Gillet told us. If that husband of hers——"

She left the sentence unfinished, and we all started as a sound of wheels reached us, coming rapidly up the garden drive, and stopping at the door. The next moment there was a loud peal at the bell.

"Who can it be at this hour? it is past eleven o'clock!" I exclaimed.

"Perhaps it is Monsieur de Valeyre," Lucy Lester suggested suddenly. I rose, and, cautiously opening the window, glanced down into the garden. The moonlight showed me a tall man's figure just alighting from a *fiacre*, the driver of which was handing down a gun-case and a portmanteau.

"It is our landlord, sure enough," I said, closing the window. "Monsieur Gillet's information has brought him home, I suppose. I hope there will be no 'scene' upstairs."

"Dear me, I hope not!" Lucy echoed; though the anticipated excitement seemed not altogether unpleasing to her.

"He is evidently not remarkable for patience," was Mrs. Brandon's comment, as another still louder peal rang though the house. "If Madame does not choose to admit him one of us must go down. Joséphine is in bed long ago."

I volunteered for the task, and, Lucy offering to accompany me, we descended, noisily escorted by Chum.

The *fiacre* was driving away as we opened the door, and the visitor stood on the step, looking out at the moonlit garden.

He turned, and, expecting no doubt to see a servant, was beginning an impatient exclamation at the delay, but checked himself on perceiving us.

"A hundred pardons, Mesdames, for disturbing you at this untimely hour," he said, raising his hat; "but I have only just arrived from Corsica. I am Monsieur de Valeyre," he added.

I bowed, and drew back to admit him, trying in vain to silence Chum, whose bark was now exchanged for a low, angry growl.

The visitor was a tall, well-built, bronze-complexioned man of six or seven and thirty, with a face which would have been strikingly handsome but for its worn and haggard look, and something repellent in the expression of the bold dark eyes.

"Your dog objects to strangers, apparently," he said, with a glance of no great favour at the terrier, who responded with a snarl which showed all his little sharp white teeth.

"He is a capital watch-dog," I said, apologetically; "he would soon let us know if there were thieves in the house."

"Ah, that reminds me——" He turned as he spoke, to put up the door-chain. "I hear from Gillet, my agent, that you were alarmed on your arrival by strange noises in the upper rooms. Do they still continue?"

"We were not alarmed exactly, but they puzzled us till we knew that Madame de Valeyre had returned."

He let fall the door-chain and turned to look at me.

"Madame de Valeyre?" he repeated.

"Yes; did not M. Gillet tell you, Monsieur, that she was here?"

"He told me you had said so, but I could not believe it; I cannot believe it now. She—my wife—is with her family at Algiers, and it is not likely she would have returned without letting me know."

"She is in the house at this moment," I said, quietly; "she has been here for the last month. We have not only heard but seen her repeatedly—have we not?" I added, turning to my companion, who echoed, "Repeatedly!"

He looked from one to the other of us with a frown, but said nothing; and, having secured the fastening of the door, took up his portmanteau and followed us upstairs.

"May I ask you to lend me your light for a moment?" he said, when we reached the landing; "I will return it presently."

Nearly a quarter of an hour elapsed before he descended. We heard him going from room to room, opening and shutting doors and windows, but no sound of voices reached us.

At last he reappeared at the open door of our sitting-room, candle in hand. Mrs. Brandon herself went forward to take it from him, looking at him scrutinizingly as she did so.

"Many thanks, Madame," he said, relinquishing it to her with a bow. Then, turning to me, he added, coldly: "You were mistaken in supposing that my wife had returned. There is no living creature in the rooms upstairs, nor have they been entered since I left them."

"But we have seen her——" I began.

"Whoever you may have seen, it was certainly not my wife," was his reply.

Before I could speak again, he added:

"I have the honour to wish you good-evening, Mesdames," and, with a comprehensive bow which included us all, he left the room.

We looked at each other bewilderedly. What did it mean? What had become of the woman?

"She must have heard his voice, and hidden herself somewhere, in fear of him," Miss Lester suggested.

"Depend upon it, she has reason to fear him," Mrs. Brandon remarked. "He looks like a man who would use his power mercilessly. It is dreadful to think of that poor half-demented creature being left unprotected to his anger, perhaps violence."

Lucy Lester drew her shawl closer round her with a shiver.

"I feel as if something terrible was going to happen," she said nervously.

The same uneasy presentiment weighed on my own mind, together with some other shadowy fear which I could not have put into words.

Feeling too anxious and excited to go to bed, we gathered round the fire again, talking in whispers, and listening apprehensively to every sound from above. For a time we heard M. de Valeyre moving about; then there was silence, only interrupted when the time-piece, chiming midnight, reminded us to wish each other a Happy New Year.

After that I must have fallen into a doze, from which I was roused by a touch on my arm.

"Edith," Mrs. Brandon whispered, "do you hear?"

I started and sat upright, looking about me in the confusion of a sudden awakening. "What is it?" I asked.

Keeping her hand on my arm, she pointed upwards. The light restless footsteps we had grown to know so well, were once more pacing to and fro overhead, and we heard the low intermittent murmur of a woman's voice. Suddenly it was interrupted by a cry—a man's hoarse cry of mortal anguish or terror, such as I trust I may never hear again.

Mingling with the cry, came a peal of eldritch laughter, then the sound of a struggle, and a heavy fall which shook the house.

"Come, or there will be murder done," Mrs. Brandon exclaimed, and she hurried from the room and upstairs, followed by Miss Lester and myself.

We found the outer door of M. de Valeyre's apartments closed, but not locked, and passing through the ante-chamber, entered the first room of the suite. A lamp on the chimney-piece showed that it was in strange disorder; the furniture displaced, the carpet upturned, the cloth half-dragged from the table.

Its only present occupant was the master of the house, who crouched against the wall at the further end, in an attitude of abject terror.

Never while I live shall I forget the face he turned towards us when we entered. With strained dilated eyes, and parted lips, it looked like an image of incarnate Fear. I stopped short over the threshold, feeling a shrinking reluctance to enter, but Mrs. Brandon without hesitation advanced to his side.

"What is the matter? what has happened?" she asked.

He looked at her vaguely, but seemed incapable of uttering a word, and put his hand to his throat as if suffocating. There was a carafe of brandy on the table. She filled a liqueur glass and held it to his lips. Presently he drew a deep sobbing breath, and half raised himself, glancing round the room with a haggard look of dread.

"Is she—gone?" he asked hoarsely.

"There is no one here but ourselves," Mrs. Brandon replied. "You——" She broke off, recoiling from him with a stifled cry.

He had started convulsively, and was gazing with a look of speechless terror at some object on the opposite side of the room. Involuntarily we followed the direction of his eyes, but to us nothing was visible.

"There she is—look!" he gasped. "My wife—dead, yet living. Keep her from me—keep her hands from my throat! Ayesha—mercy—pardon! Oh, Heaven."

He crouched against the wall again, putting out both hands to repel some invisible assailant; struggling desperately as if with an actual bodily antagonist, and apparently using all his strength to keep the murderous fingers from his throat.

Mrs. Brandon had fled from him in a panic, and we all three stood on the threshold, watching with horror-struck eyes that ghastly struggle. It did not last long. With a dreadful choking cry he dropped his arms; his whole figure collapsed and fell in a heap, face downwards, on the floor.

Strangely enough my fear had now utterly passed away. While the others hesitated I approached him and lifted his head, and turned his face to the light. After one glance I laid it down again with a shudder. "Has he fainted again?" they asked me. "He is dead," I answered, as I rose.

Yes, he was dead; but *how* had he died? What was the meaning of those livid finger-marks, which, for a moment, I had seen plainly printed on his throat? That is a mystery which has never been solved.

* * * * *

The sudden death of the master of the Villa de l'Orient caused a sensation in Nice, where he was well known, and it was intensified by a rumour that Madame de Valeyre had mysteriously disappeared. There was no trace of her recent presence in the house, and it was ascertained that her relatives in Algeria had had no news of her for more than a year. Some other facts came to light which threw a sinister suspicion on the dead man. Search was made in the garden and grounds, and finally her body was discovered buried under the old olive-tree. An Algerian scarf, tightly knotted round her throat, showed what had been the manner of her death.

It need hardly be said that we took flight as soon as possible from the ill-omened house, which was shortly afterwards demolished by order of the Valeyre family, so that not a vestige now remains of what we once called "our villa."

MISJUDGED.

We thought her patient feet were strong
  Life's bleakest heights to win :
(We never dreamed of secret wounds
  Which throb and bleed within !)

We judged her heart too lofty for
  Earth's petty pains to touch :
(We said apart that she was one
  Who would not love too much !)

We told her all our woes and wrongs,
  Because she found redress,
(But others had our gayer hours,
  Our flattery and caress !)

And if we could not know her right,
  We loved to think her wrong :
(Such feeble hands may throw the mire
  Which stains the pure and strong!)

We whispered, " Need she work so hard ? "
  ('Twas love of gear, we said)
Yet somehow every face grew pale
  To hear that she was dead !)

With wreaths and crosses in our hands,
  For last good-byes we went,
And all our hearts were pricked to see
  Her face of glad content !

It seemed to say she'd fought life through,
  But thanked God it was o'er,
And turned from earth and us with smiles
  We had not seen before.

Then line by line her tale came out—
  The bravest deeds she'd done
Were blossoms from the tender love
  The woman felt for one !

Such bitter wrongs as she had borne,
  While scattering pity wide !
(But she had sued for justice once—
  And she had been denied !)

The very faults she most deplored
  Were little but the trace
Of wrongs which scar a suffering soul,
  As blows might mar a face !

Yet we had sat at ease, nor joined
  Her battles for the right :
Nor had she only foes before,
  But " friends " behind, to fight.

For all about her broken life
  We found the stones we'd thrown :
And now it was no use to sigh,
  " Oh, had we only known ! "

ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO

THE TOMBS OF THE CALIPHS.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "The Bretons at Home," "Letters from Majorca," etc., etc.

A House-well.

IT was a glorious morning, even for Egypt. The sun had risen over Cairo with its accustomed splendour. Solitary and alone we had watched the phases of transition from the roof of the Hôtel d'Angleterre: a grateful solitude. All the disturbing element, the thousand and one voices that, waking, are never still, were at rest. For them, the loveliest hour of the daily round meant nothing more than daybreak. In vain the sun painted the skies as Turner himself never imagined them; like the sluggard, they all slumbered and slept, deaf to the call of this incense breathing morn.

From the roof of the hotel we watched the changes. It was scarcely twilight when we had gone up amongst the pigeons and the chimney-pots. The evening star still hung in the west, pure, pale and liquid: a perfect gem in a fathomless setting. Eastward the Mosque of

Mohammed Ali crowned the citadel. From some neighbouring minaret came the clear voice of the muezzin, bidding the faithful to prayer. The traveller crossing the desert, the fellah hastening through the street to his daily work—the one in response to the sun, the other at the bidding of the voice—would spread their carpet or handkerchief, and fall upon their knees. Still rang the cry of the muezzin. "Prayer is better than sleep!" he declared. "Allah! Allah! Allah! There is no God but God!" There are no bells here to call the worshippers together, but never was bell so impressive as this human voice penetrating the air in the stillness of the early morning. It thrills the listener even though he be no follower of the False Prophet, and insensibly the heart is drawn upwards; he too worships, but in his own way and after his own creed.

The city was quiet and sleeping. Had it been midsummer, at this hour there would already have been stir and activity abroad; for the people are early risers. The streets would have begun to look like the busy hive they generally are; caravanserais to be on the move, with their long strings of heavily-laden camels and their small crowd of merchants trafficking in precious stones, in rich Persian and Oriental brocades, in the spices of Arabia; the banks of the Nile to awaken, boats and ferries to shoot to and fro with their freights, human, animal, and vegetable; the broad quays of the harbours to tremble as the perfumed bales were thrown about in the process of loading and unloading the merchant vessels moored so picturesquely to their sides.

But it was midwinter: summer weather for us Europeans, a time of more or less endurance to the chilly African; and so Cairo and its people were still sleeping. It was not a Friday; it was not a holy day; no crowd of palm-laden worshippers was hastening towards the cemetery to pay its devotions to the tombs of Sheykhs and saints, and dole out its charity to the poor.

Paler grew that wonderful star in the west. The sky was gorgeous with crimson flames and flashes. All the mosques and minarets of the city seemed steeped in a rich orange glow. The opal tints of the north were pure and beautiful as they ever are. Then a sudden subtle change announced sunrise; it needed no signal-gun to tell the moment: Nature herself marked it beyond all doubt. The crimson succeeded to gold; Venus, clothed with modesty before this fiery lord of the day, made herself invisible. Nothing could be more wonderful than the changes of sky and atmosphere; the gorgeous colours that flashed and flamed, and seemed to appear only to die out the next moment, making the whole scene subtle as a perfume, intangible as the whispering of the leaves.

And all this beauty was lost upon a sleeping world. By the time the sleepers awoke and stretched lazily, and thought it time to get up, and breakfast, and begin the daily round and join in the daily babel,

the earth had put off her celestial garb, and in the flat, equal light of the broad day, beauty and romance had died out. Yet, after all, it was only a question of degree. In this rarefied atmosphere, under these Eastern skies, beauty never dies. It is always there, hand in hand with the picturesque, the historical, the religious, the traditional; surrounding the thoughtful student of life and nature with an atmosphere in which romance and reality are so closely blended that it is impossible sometimes to say where the one ends and the other begins.

BEFORE SUNSET.

We came down from our house-top that morning very much disposed to moralize: perhaps, with the weakness of human nature, feeling slightly superior to those who wasted all this magnificent reality, these gorgeous effects, in dreamland. It needed the voice of the Prophet—not the False Prophet—to arouse them with his warning: "Sleepers, wake! a voice is calling!" And the voice heard in all that painted sky, intangible, evanescent though it may be, was heavenly and divine. But the prophets are sleeping their long sleep, and the days of prophecies and miracles are over. The voices are silent.

After breakfast—one cannot live upon brilliant skies and rainbow atmospheres—we decided to visit the Tombs of the Mamelukes, and communicated our wish to our dragoman. As he was agreeable, even approved, the matter was settled.

"Yes, sir; you cannot do better. It is not a special morning" (meaning some special sight or entertainment not to be done at any other time), "and it is very fine." In point of fact, it was always fine, but Aleck loved to give reasons and to hear himself talk.

"How had we better go?" we inquired.

"Nothing so good as donkeys, sir," he replied; "especially for those old mosques and tombs. They are full of up-and-down steps, narrow passages, and broken roads, where carriages cannot pass. I will order some fine animals."

True to his word, the fine animals were at the door in half-an-hour. We were just about to mount with much humility of mind, when Osman appeared upon the scene; dashing up in the equipage that had met him at the station.

"I see I am just in time," he cried. "Wherever you were going, dismiss your donkeys and come with me. I have a fervent desire this morning to visit my old friends the Mameluke tombs and mosques; and we must see them together. *Les beaux esprits se rencontrent*,—I believe you were about to do the same."

"The very same," we returned. "And to exchange our humble quadrupeds for your luxurious chariot, is like entering the field of battle a commoner and leaving it a duke."

Osman laughed. "Did not something very like that happen to your Wellington?" he asked. "A man for whom I, like the rest of the world, have ever had the highest admiration; for he was great, not only on the battle-field, but in all circumstances of life. A great commander is not very often also a great statesman."

"May not that be from want of opportunity?" we asked.

"I think not," he returned. "Genius will out, and rises above the force of circumstances."

By this time we were *en route*. Aleck, bringing up the rear on donkeyback, no doubt felt, for the moment, that Othello's occupation was gone.

The streets were already well filled with people, and as far as possible they scattered right and left to make way. The mob recognized the Khedive's equipage, and Osman himself seemed well known to them. Yet with every endeavour to clear the road, we were often brought up sharply, and had to drive at a slow pace. It was not to be regretted. Streets and people were full of interest.

"The Egyptians are early risers," remarked Osman, as he looked upon the many-coloured turbans and flowing abbas that crossed our path. "They also go to bed early. Otherwise they would scarcely be ready at sunrise for their morning prayers."

"Are the women equally devotional?" we asked.

"No; it is not expected of them. Their duties are more domestic. They are the Marthas, not the Marys of the world; they serve and wait. Many a wife will prepare the coffee and fill the pipe whilst her lord and master is praying."

"The pipe seems more to them than the meal," we said. "They are not always eating, but they are always smoking."

"True," returned Osman. "In eating they are abstemious; in smoking they have no moderation. And they are fastidious: as particular about their stems and mouthpieces, and as proud, as a luxurious Englishman about his collection of meerschaums. There is the 'Shibuk'—or *Chibook*, as we call it in Turkey—which, with its long stem covered with silk and ornamented with gold thread, its snake-like tube and its gaudy bowl of baked earth, is a picturesque, Eastern-looking object; suggestive of opium, and dreams, and visions. It is generally made of a sort of maple, but many of the stems are of cherry-wood. Then there is the Persian pipe, where the smoke passes through water, and which is called 'nargeeleh,' an Arabic word meaning cocoa-nut. Again there is the pipe with a glass bowl, which is called *Sheesheh*. So, you see, smoking with the Easterns comes almost next to religion: and every one is bound to smoke in self-defence."

"At least, they have a pleasant and inoffensive way of using their shibuks," we remarked, "which might almost be called the refinement of smoking. They make very little smoke, and have not other bad habits common to Europeans who indulge in the fragrant weed."

"True again," returned Osman. "In this one indulgence they are fastidious and refined. Their reason for making little smoke is that they swallow so much of it. The Arabic word for smoking really means *drinking tobacco*. It is an injurious habit, but they grow used to it: as the workers in the mines of Hungary grow used to eating arsenic. I believe that the human frame may accustom itself to any habit that does not directly set up organic mischief—a dangerous doctrine, perhaps. Also, after passing through four or five yards of stem and tubing, the smoke is cool and to some extent filtered. The higher classes are very particular about their tobacco. It is of an exquisite flavour and expensive. The Egyptians possess a delicate and refined, almost effeminate palate for scents and flavours. Only the choicest tobacco will suit them, and with their coffee they are wont to mix the fragrant ambergris."

"In short," we observed, "the refinements we meet with in the 'Arabian Nights'; the perfumed atmosphere, the aromatic coffee presented to you in golden cups, the rich interiors chequered by a thousand tints as the sun falls upon the stained windows, the dreamy, half-voluptuous existence of the opium-smoker—all this exists in the life of the Arabian of to-day. Nothing is wanting excepting Aladdin's wonderful lamp and the element of magic."

"And even scarcely that," laughed Osman. "For in some houses you may clap your hands, and immediately a dozen slaves will appear

to do your bidding. An empty hall, by almost invisible means, will be transported, in less time than it takes to tell you, into a luxurious dining-room, where tables loaded with viands, with rich and rare fruits and wines, will surprise your vision, whilst perfumed waters or burning spices intoxicate your senses with a subtle vapour. The whole effect is instantaneous and magical. If ever you should come to visit me in Constantinople," he added—"as I hope you may—I will do all this for you."

"But surely you are describing the luxurious days of Antony and Cleopatra," we cried. "Such habits of ease and self-indulgence were never yours."

"There you are right," he returned, more seriously. "I hold it that simplicity of taste and habit should be the rule of life. But the machinery for all I have described to you existed before I came into the world; and if ever I employ it, it is only to astonish some friend or guest, and for a moment bring before him in reality what, in the Arabian Nights, he has enjoyed so often in imagination."

'How different is your life, how much more fervent and vivid your imagination, than anything to be found in our colder climates," we said. "There everything is the very essence of prose; all becomes matter of fact; we are frigid and unemotional as our East winds. You, on the contrary, live in a land of poetry and dreams, of delicate perfumes and rainbow tints, of violent hatred but of passionate love."

"You have your compensations,' returned Osman, "and, as a nation, need never desire to be other than you are. In point of greatness I am bound to say that I think you have reached your highest. Your little island, once mistress of the world, is beginning to decline; and the decline comes to you from within. You have enemies in the camp. 'A man's foes shall be they of his own household,' may be said of you. Schism is the order of the day; your Government grows disorganised; party spirit, not the good of the country, is every man's aim. If the Conservative power in England could hold its own, there might be hope; but it will not do so. Disunion, disruption, anarchy—all this lies before you ere the 20th century has passed out of its teens. You have given the power over to the multitude; and of all classes in the world your lower class is the most hopeless. I attribute much of this to the work of one man; and you will find in the history of almost every country that has had its day that one man alone has chiefly aimed its death-blow. But forgive me. I am forgetting that it cannot be agreeable to you to listen to such prophecies, however little you may agree with me. After all, it is only my own opinion; and it lies in the future. Under the altered condition of the world, it would be impossible for you to retain the greatness you once had—even though you still possessed the great men who have left no successors. The mantle of Elijah has not fallen upon your men in high places—though if I go on prophesying at this rate you will say it has fallen upon me."

At that moment a carriage with Saïs running before it rapidly crossed our path through a street running at right angles with our own. It served to change the subject.

"One of the Khedive's carriages," said Osman, as it disappeared, "but the Khedive is not in it. He is not well, and in fact no one but myself has seen him to-day. I do not like his look. I am persuaded that he is not really strong, and I sometimes think that in any serious illness it would go hard with him. The thought makes me tremble. Not only should I lose a true friend—he has been singularly partial to me—but Egypt would lose a wise ruler. Heaven avert such a calamity! If it ever came to pass—and if England changed her foreign policy and gave up Egypt—the consequences would be disastrous: and not for Egypt only."

Looking back as we write, this past conversation almost reads like a foreshadowing of what was before very long to happen. Osman evidently possessed the highest regard and affection for the Viceroy, a condition of mind and spirit that sometimes endows its possessor with almost a foresight of the future. There was a certain hopelessness, a melancholy in his tone which argued a fear almost amounting to prevision. He prayed that it might not happen: some latent consciousness whispered that he prayed in vain.

All the sights and sounds of Cairo were awakening. The water-carriers were crying aloud; the sellers of date-bread sat whisking behind their trays, waking up to energy whenever a customer found the delectable compound irresistible. The money-changers posted at the corners calculated the exchange of the day at ruinous interest. The teachers had begun their daily task of instructing the young idea in the bare elements of education; and the youthful prodigies were keeping up their daily tradition of making the task as hard as possible: the mischievous element ever rife amongst them.

We met the usual complement of tourists; cavalcades of twos and threes and half-dozens plodding along on donkeys—we ourselves having just escaped adding to the number. They presented the general appearance of tourists abroad; absurdities and exaggerations scarcely equalled in the pages of *Punch*, in the days when wit and humour dwelt amongst us. All these donkey-parties had their donkey-boys and their dragomans, who helped to keep up the noise and liveliness of the scene, and uphold the reputation of the country. Osman was equally amused at the foreign element.

"I see them day after day," he laughed, "but never grow used to them. Their appearance never seems less ridiculous, or their manners less exaggerated. Familiarity here does not breed contempt—nor custom stale their wonderful variety. Nine people out of ten who travel have no poetry in their soul, no true appreciation of nature. They pass from place to place only to kill time and satisfy a spirit of restlessness. The desire to lay up in store a recollection

of scenes and places and incidents all their own, for the days when the grasshopper begins to be a burden, never enters into their imagination. Half the people who travel do so with their eyes closed. But see here—we had need to keep our own well open!"

For we were passing the Mosque of Sultan Hassan, which stands out so magnificently below the citadel. It is one of the finest Mohammedan monuments in the world, and the inhabitants of Cairo are almost justified in thinking it unrivalled. Before us was its gigantic and magnificent porch, rich in that honeycombed ornamentation that is so effective, so delicately refined and beautiful. A splendid cornice crowned its lofty walls. A long narrow shabby flight, of steps led up to the doorway, protected by a simple railing. An old guardian stood near the entrance, who, on seeing Osman, advanced and bowed with every sign of reverence. Osman returned the salutation.

"You are well known here," we observed.

"These men have a wonderful memory for faces," returned Osman. "Besides that, they have frequently seen me with the Khedive, and fancy that I possess unlimited power and influence. Lastly, I spend much of my spare time in wandering about these old mosques, and losing myself in dreams of the past; imagining the lives of those who trod these stones centuries ago; of those who raised these wonderful monuments with a strength of purpose we have altogether lost. See," he continued, "on the one hand you have a monument to departed greatness, and on the other hand evidence of our own inability to accomplish what is truly great."

He pointed to a new mosque opposite to that of Hassan, in course of construction. It was intended to outrival the mosque of the Sultan, but long before completion was abandoned: and now remains unfinished, a reproach to those whose ambition was greater than their power. They had begun to build without counting the cost.

It was a wonderful scene. We were now in the immense open space of the Place Roomeleh, where all was life and movement. It was crowded with Egyptians, many of them squatting upon the ground; camels and donkeys near them, men buying and selling, lounging in idleness, divided into groups. Others thronged together, hustling each other, as intent upon gaining their own small ends as if the fate of the world depended upon success or failure. About all there was a certain grace; a grace of movement; a grace even in repose, the greater perhaps that it was unconscious and unstudied. Their garments clothe the form without disturbing its symmetry. Many were passing rapidly to and fro; to distant parts of the town; to destinations perhaps far beyond the town. The scene was full of animation. Before us rose the wonderful mosque with its gigantic walls, richly ornamented windows, magnificent cornice; the beautiful dome towering in dignity and grandeur, whilst the minarets at each corner, unequal in height, but equal in grace

"Tourists" in Difficulties.

and charm, completed the picture. Again we were gazing upon a scene out of the Arabian Nights. Beyond all lay the city, with its flat roofs, its innumerable mosques and minarets; all enveloped in an Eastern atmosphere not to be found elsewhere. Above us stood the citadel in proud seclusion, crowning the indestructible rock on which it stands, and guarding, as it seemed, the Mosque of Mohammed Ali.

"It is all a dream; an Eastern dream," said Osman; "and although I may be said almost to belong to it by birth and training, I am ever more and more attracted and enchanted. I have seen all the countries of the world and the glories of them; places and people at their best; the Himalayas of India, the Alps of Switzerland, the sunny vineyards of Italy, the wide Nevada plains of Granada, crowned by the glorious Alhambra, the wonderful Bay of Naples in the south, the fjords and glaciers of the North, the matchless beauties of Ceylon: but nothing of these has ever attracted or impressed me as do some of the old mosques of Cairo, that wonderful panorama from the citadel, with the solemn pyramids, the windings of the sacred Nile in the distance; and at our feet those matchless and superb tombs of the Caliphs that we are about to visit. Not that they have half as much to do with the Caliphs as with the Mamelukes. And if it were only for these monuments alone we must forgive the wild and lawless reign of those slave-sovereigns. The lot is cast into the lap, and wonderful are the changes and vicissitudes in the history of nations and of individuals!"

We passed under the shadow of the citadel into the hot, white, dusty road, leading to the celebrated tombs. As Osman had said, everything about us was a dream; we felt as if we must presently awaken to all the prosy commonplace realities of everyday life. And everything was more or less a ruin. The very road itself seemed a ruin, covered as it was with débris of bricks and mortar that had been crumbling there for ages. A scene of which the eye could never grow weary: an accumulation of mosques, and tombs large, expansive, imposing enough to be temples: that indeed were such. The whole surrounding tone was dazzling; a fawn-colour of the purest and most refined description; a colour so like the plains of the desert that it almost seemed as if the shifting sand had consolidated to form them. Domes and minarets rose in perfect proportions, exquisite outlines against the brilliant blue of the unbroken sky. There was a golden tint upon all. The sun might have been the artist—had been so in part; giving his own glorious imperishable glow to the matchless buildings. There were windows of wonderful tracery, and doorways of exquisite design. We were surrounded by Saracenic architecture of the purest description. Here again were all the marvels of the "Arabian Nights," but exceeding all we had ever imagined.

We had left the carriage and were now walking amongst these

wonders, scarcely knowing which way to turn, where all seemed to claim one's attention.

"Is it not wonderful?" cried Osman, with almost boyish enthusiasm, whilst his eyes flashed with excitement and his whole countenance lighted up with pleasure. "Could you not come here and muse and contemplate and lose yourself day after day, all the days of your life? It is not only an assemblage of tombs, but a veritable dead city. Could anything look more desolate and deserted? We might be gazing upon a vision in the vast wilderness: a mirage that will presently dissolve and disappear, leaving, as Shakespeare says, not a wreck behind!"

The scene more than deserved all the praise, all the enthusiasm he gave it. Over all Time had laid his beautifying finger, and the aspect of partial ruin, of crumbling walls, of domes and minarets touched with decay, added no little to the charm and enchantment of these "Tombs of the Caliphs."

"A city of the dead," repeated Osman. "For here in days gone by dwelt a large number of sheykhs and their followers. These, with their families, made up quite a population, and as the tombs were richly endowed, everything flourished. The Caliphs really had their tombs within Cairo itself, on the site of what is now one of the chief bazaars. As you know, these ancient Arab sovereigns reigned in Egypt as independent princes in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. One solitary tomb still remains in the centre of the bazaar; you must have remarked it."

"Looking singular and out of place: an emblem of death and decay in the midst of one of the most crowded and busiest scenes in Cairo," we replied.

"Perhaps it has its uses," said Osman, smiling, "and may bring to the minds of some, in the midst of their sale and barter, that for each and all must the end come. My own two favourite mottoes have been the mottoes of a famous Eastern Sultan: 'This also must pass away,' and 'Look well to the end.' That tomb in the midst of the busy mart seems to be ever repeating the warnings. In 1292, when the bazaar was founded, it is said that all the tombs with this one exception were destroyed, and the bones of the dead were scattered amidst the rubbish heaps outside the city walls; some may have lain on the very spot on which we are standing, for all we know; and at night these tomb-mosques, these deserted thoroughfares, might well be haunted by the spirits of those whose graves were desecrated. Perhaps if we come here to-night at the witching hour they will appear to us."

"A long unrest," we laughed. "It is seven hundred years ago. What a penance for the departed!"

"But with them," returned Osman, "time is annihilated. Seven hundred years or seven million years will be the same. There is no dating forward, as with us. Few of us live in the present. It is

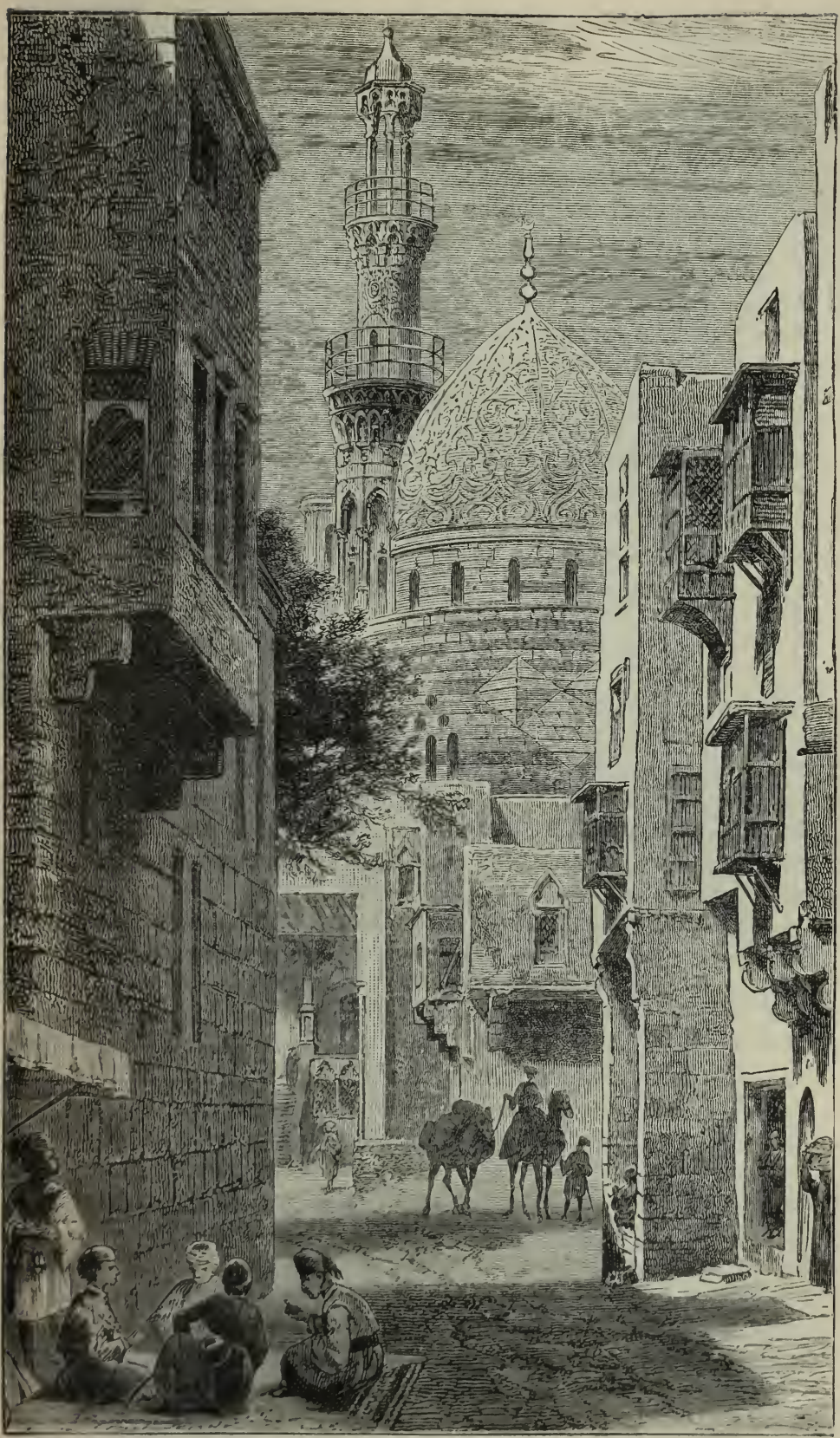
always to-morrow, or next week, or next year; the mind is ever stretching forward. Imagine the REST of an existence where this dating forward has ceased, and the present is all in all; where there is no future, because there is no limit."

We were standing in front of the mosque-tomb of Barkook, the first of the Circassian Mameluke Sultans. It dates from the year 1382—784 of the Hejira—and was built by Barkook towards the close of his reign: a reign signalled by many victories, and much tyranny and bloodshed.

We stood silent before the building. Of its kind, Cairo possesses nothing to compare with it. Its superb tone was matchless; its charm infinitely added to by an appearance of semi-ruin; crumbling walls on which Time had laid his softening and refining hand. At each of the north and south extremities rose a magnificent dome, still perfect and uninjured. Beneath the one lie the bodies of the male members of the dynasty; beneath the other, those of the female. Here in this matchless monument, this mausoleum without rival, they repose in their last long sleep, glorious in death, whatever they might have been in life: a long rest, a solemn calm indeed, as compared with the tyranny and turmoil, the excesses and cruelties of their reigns.

In the centre was a small cupola, whilst two minarets, also perfect and beautiful and scarcely touched by Time, rose in slender and narrowing stages of utmost grace, pointing to the blue of the matchless sky—a singular contrast to the substantial proportions of the domes. The walls were crowned by a series of battlements in the form of the trefoil. The minarets rise from the west end of the building, which is rectangular. The first stage was square and had no other ornamentation than its trefoil windows, ending in a light graceful balcony; the second stage was circular, ornamented with broken lines, which relieved the plainness of the surface; the third and last stage was a slender column, pierced, and through its open work one caught glimpses of the far off sky. These minarets were once crowned by small cupolas, which must have added to their charm and Oriental feeling, but they have disappeared under the hand of time. They are of the purest, most Saracenic architecture; only equalled by the minaret of the small but exquisite Mosque of Kait-Bey.

Two crumbling and beautiful doorways once gave access to the interior—one to the N.W., the other to the S.W. The former and larger is now disused: an architrave of alabaster, with trefoil ornamentation. The S.W. doorway, like much of the tomb, is in a ruinous state. Through this one entered an outer vestibule and passed into a light and elegant gallery leading to the large square court. This court or quadrangle was surrounded on three sides by porticos; square pillars supporting double-pointed arches of limestone, alternately white and red, rich in all the matchless tones of antiquity. Between the arches were small caps or head-pieces of brick, singular but



STREET IN CAIRO.

effective. From the cross-beams of the arches once hung innumerable lamps, most of which have disappeared. Imagination pictures the scene in the centuries gone by. Night and darkness; a large crowd of worshippers, and these lamps all lighted, throwing out ghostly glimmerings and weird shadows. Above, the dark sky, with its own eternal lamps travelling onwards. This must have been oft recurring, and above the sighing of the wind and the whispering of the palm-trees rose the curious murmurings amidst infinite genuflexions, without which these Eastern people know not how to worship.

The Tomb of Barkook reposes in a small room to the left of the sanctuary, this sanctuary being marked by three ranges of six columns, very beautifully disposed. The tomb itself is a large stone catafalque, very simply carved, surrounded by a more elaborately carved wooden railing. The cross-beams from which the lamps once hung are partly broken away. The lamps have disappeared. Small, beautiful trellised windows, long and narrow, crowned by rose windows, admit the daylight. These were once filled with the richest glass, which bathed the tomb chamber in rainbow tints: the dim religious light which appeals so strongly to the imagination. The angles of the roof are filled in by niches elaborately honeycombed and very charming in effect. Narrow bands of decoration containing Cufic inscriptions entwine themselves about the windows and roses. It is all wonderfully graceful and refined. The great courtyard or quadrangle looks ruined and neglected. Grass grows between the stones; heaps of crumbling rubbish lie here and there; in the centre is the fountain used in days gone by for washing. Its source is dried up; the great basins are empty; all has a sad and suggestive appearance. A group of stunted and melancholy trees surrounds the fountain, and they seem for ever to be whispering the same burden: OUR GLORY HAS DEPARTED. The words appear to shine out above every portico, on every ruined wall, on the slender minarets that seem to raise appealing hands to the skies in protest of all this change and desolation. From their summits the form of the muezzin is no longer seen, his voice no longer heard, bidding the faithful to prayer. In this dead city there are none to hear.

"And it has departed for ever," said Osman, as we stood near the fountain looking round upon the building. "The day will come when not one stone will be left upon another. Those fine domes, those slender minarets which now charm us so unspeakably, will gradually vanish and disappear. No one cares about preserving these matchless monuments; it seems that there is no one to care. To the Khedive I have over and over again pointed out the necessity that something should be done. He seems to think it hopeless. Having a difficult position to fill, occupied with the cares of the state, a monarch without all a monarch's privileges and freedom, he appears to have no time to spare, no thought to give to crumbling ruins. And

TOMB-MOSQUE OF KAIT-BEY.

as I have told you, there sometimes comes over him a sadness and depression when I am with him alone, which seems to me almost like a foreshadowing of some evil to come.

"Let us hope you are mistaken," we returned earnestly. "He is too good a man to be spared; though it is hard for us who cannot see the end from the beginning to say who can best be spared. No doubt the earth is gradually working out a destiny fore-ordained in the councils of eternity. But these tombs of the Caliphs—it does indeed seem terrible that they should perish for want of care."

"One's only consolation is that restoration would take so much from their beauty," said Osman. "All restored monuments lose far more than they gain—but they are preserved. We now see these tombs at their best and loveliest. The refining finger of Time is upon them, the charm and melancholy of semi-ruin. But my favourite of all is the small mosque-tomb of Kait-Bey. Let us to it. I shall be surprised if you are not enchanted."

The distance was not great; the walk was a wonder and delight. We were surrounded by these glorious and half-ruined monuments. It was a thoroughfare of tombs, where dwelt eternal silence and repose. On every hand were vestiges of the past; the grand past ages of work and will and accomplishment, sullied in the case of the Mamelukes by tyranny and excesses that led to ruin and annihilation. Our road was marked by thick white dust; we left our footprints deep in the sand which blows up in drifts from the desert: veritable foot-prints in the sands of time. Heaps of loose stones and rubbish lay crumbling about, remnants of the buildings of past ages. We raised our eyes, and broken walls met our gaze, full of beauty and sadness; exquisite domes and cupolas and minarets, all outlined against that wonderful sky. And we had it to ourselves: all the world and his wife seemed to have gone other ways—up the Nile, or to the Boulak Museum, or the Pyramids: anywhere but here, and we profited by the solitude. A crowd would have destroyed all the charm of the scene. We were also early—one of the great secrets of enjoyment in travelling.

Turning our faces southwards, we passed on the left a dome which belongs to an unrecorded tomb. What being—sultan or sultan's wife, or great uncrowned head—sleeps beneath this nameless grave will never be known. Perhaps it is the resting-place of one who, spiritually and mentally, was above his fellows, to whom the world had proved a vain delusion, and who wished to pass out of life and "make no sign," sleeping for ever in the blessedness of "a great obscurity." Next came the tomb-mosque of El Ashraf, a mighty man of valour, who took prisoner John III., King of Cyprus, exacting an annual tribute for his release. He concluded a peace with the Tartars, took possession of Jeddah, securing all the Indian trade that flowed into this Meccan port, and in other ways distinguished his short reign from 1422 to 1438: though it was long in comparison

with the reigns of many of the Mamelukes. The exterior of the mosque has a network of arabesques, and its cupola is especially graceful; in contradistinction to the minaret, which is dwarfed, and consists of three stages—square, octagonal, and circular. The interior is oblong, divided by two ranges of pointed arches, resting on columns. The pavement, consisting of coloured stones, is very fine; but on the whole the impression of the interior is more or less that of a ruin. Above the tomb-chamber rises the exquisite dome. In the immediate neighbourhood of this mosque are other mosques and tombs, cupolas, domes, and minarets: one the burial-place of the members of the family of Mabed er-Rafáee, the great saint; another called the Tomb of the Seven Maidens: a legend supposed to be borrowed from the Seven Sleepers—for there is no other record of their existence.

Still with our faces turned southwards we passed into a somewhat different scene. Before us rose the wonderful tomb-mosque of Kait-Bey, the most important of all the sultans of his dynasty; the most important of the tombs, though not the largest, and giving its name to the whole district of the Tombs of the Caliphs. It stands on a considerable elevation, so that its solitary cupola and minaret are, as they were intended to be, very conspicuous. It appears to be the centre of a small village or settlement, for here amidst the tombs of the dead, are small habitations for the living. Such as they are, they are crowded with beings, who were in full evidence. Hitherto our progress through the Tombs of the Caliphs had been marked by a profound silence, abandonment, and desolation. Our own footsteps, our own voices, alone awoke the startled echoes of the desolated quadrangles and melancholy tomb-chambers. Here, on the contrary, surrounding the tomb of Kait-Bey, were sounds and sights of life in its most commonplace element. Narrow lanes or thoroughfares ran between high walls; and here children played, and ran up to us with outstretched hands asking for *backsheesh;* and women and maidens went to and fro to the well, filling their pitchers, and carrying them with that grace which seems inseparable from the Eastern woman.

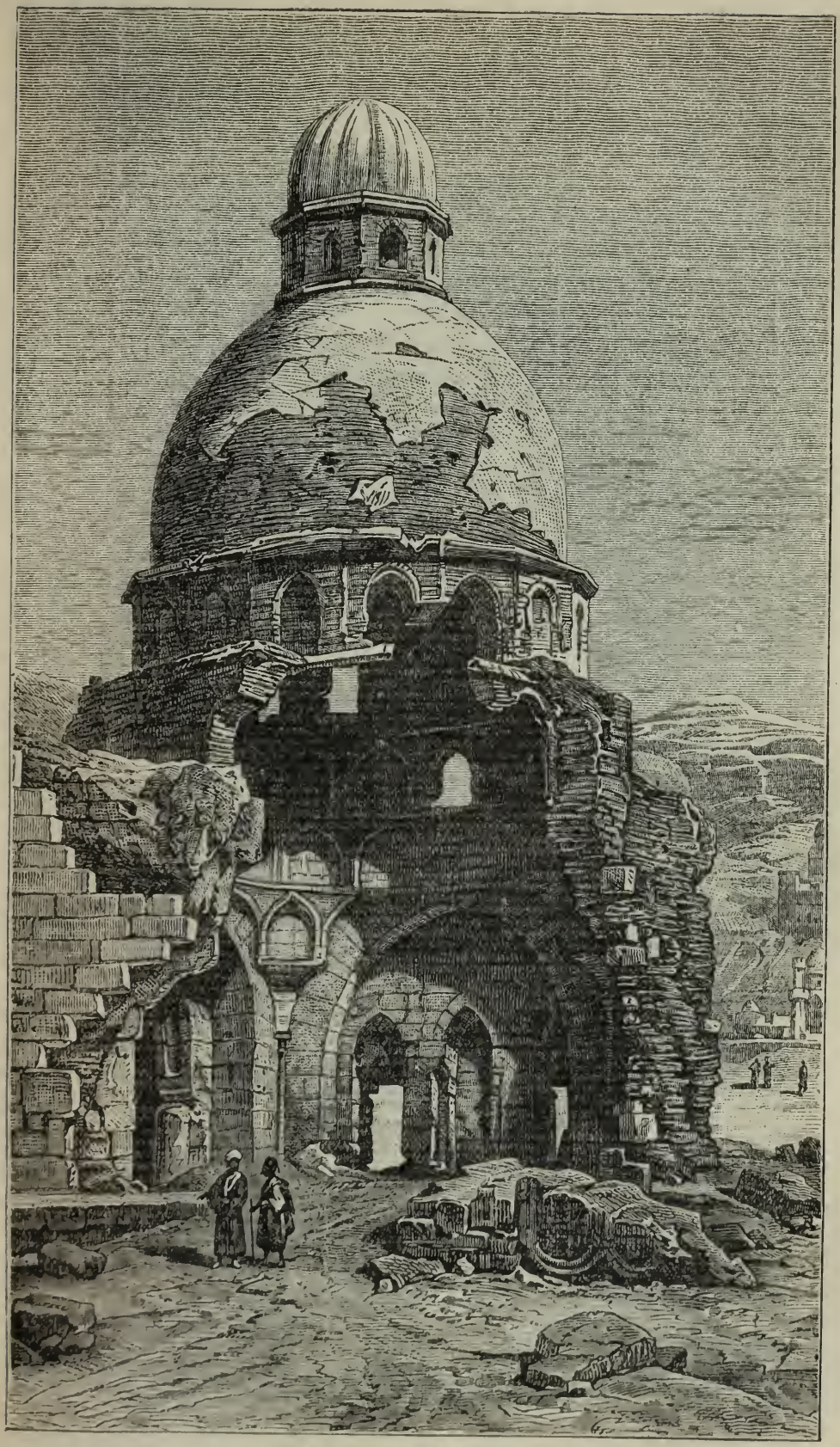
We did not like the change. The sacredness of the precincts appeared sullied; the charm broken. But it quickly returned as we gave our undivided attention to the tomb itself. To our left was the public fountain, and above it the children's school.

The tomb is the best preserved of all the tombs of the Caliphs. As a model of the grace and elegance of the Eastern school of architecture, it is unrivalled, far surpassing all the Western buildings of its age. The style is the very antipodes of the Greek school, with its simplicity, its pure and severe outlines; yet though the one may appeal more forcibly to the intellect, one's sense of severity, the other more closely appeals to the imagination. But it is so surrounded by small habitations that it is difficult to gain any true idea of its

general effect. It was impossible to photograph it or to sketch it, excepting in detail; and even then only by risking one's limbs on heaps of crumbling rubbish; or one's life on the tops of neighbouring walls and roofs, where only cats could be sure of safety. Yet its exquisite proportions were not to be concealed. The outlines of the slender cupola are perfect, and its beauty is heightened by the network of arabesques sculptured in relief which covers with rich and fine effect. Its minaret may be taken as a model of its kind. It possesses three stages, narrowing as they proceed upwards, with projecting galleries. Galleries, windows, even the minaret itself, are decorated with exquisite sculptures.

All this is visible in detachments, as it were, from the uncomfortable vantage-grounds we have described, where human beings who are only bipeds have to tread lightly, taking their courage in both hands. These tombs, once so richly endowed, had their revenues confiscated at the commencement of the century; the Sheykhs, their families and followers, had to leave the precincts and make fresh homes for themselves. But some of the poorer dependants remained, and the people now inhabiting the small tenements in the neighbourhood of the Kait-Bey tomb are their descendants. The tombs themselves, no longer endowed, are, as we have said, gradually falling to ruin. Infinitely beautiful, they were not built of the solid material of the Pyramids or the old Egyptian temples, over which five thousand years have passed as a mere moment of time: for the hand of man, not the lapse of ages, is chiefly responsible for the almost imperishable ruins that line the banks of the Nile: for the broken shafts and columns of temples that lie about in such countless numbers, and for the desolated cities of the plains. Thebes, Memphis, and a hundred other towns might yet be standing, if man had spared them.

The porch of the tomb of Kait-Bey was once protected by an enclosure which is now in ruins. A short flight of eight steps led up to the doorway, immediately above which rises the minaret, perfect in form, exquisite in its sculptured arabesques. The porch somewhat resembled that of the mosque of Hassan, on a reduced scale, for it was surmounted by an arch in the form of a trefoil, with honeycombed recesses and stalactite pendentives. Passing through the porch, you enter a small passage or vestibule paved with coloured stones, the walls being similarly decorated. The effect is rich and harmonious: the Easterns thoroughly understood the blending of colours, and never sacrificed refinement to richness of tone. From this, one passed into a large chamber crowned by an octagonal construction of wood, admitting daylight through narrow apertures. The arrangement of the whole interior is marked by simplicity as much as by harmony of detail and tone, and perfection of form and outline. The large, expansive, pointed circle is conspicuous. The *Liwán* is raised slightly above the *Sólm*, separated by this same



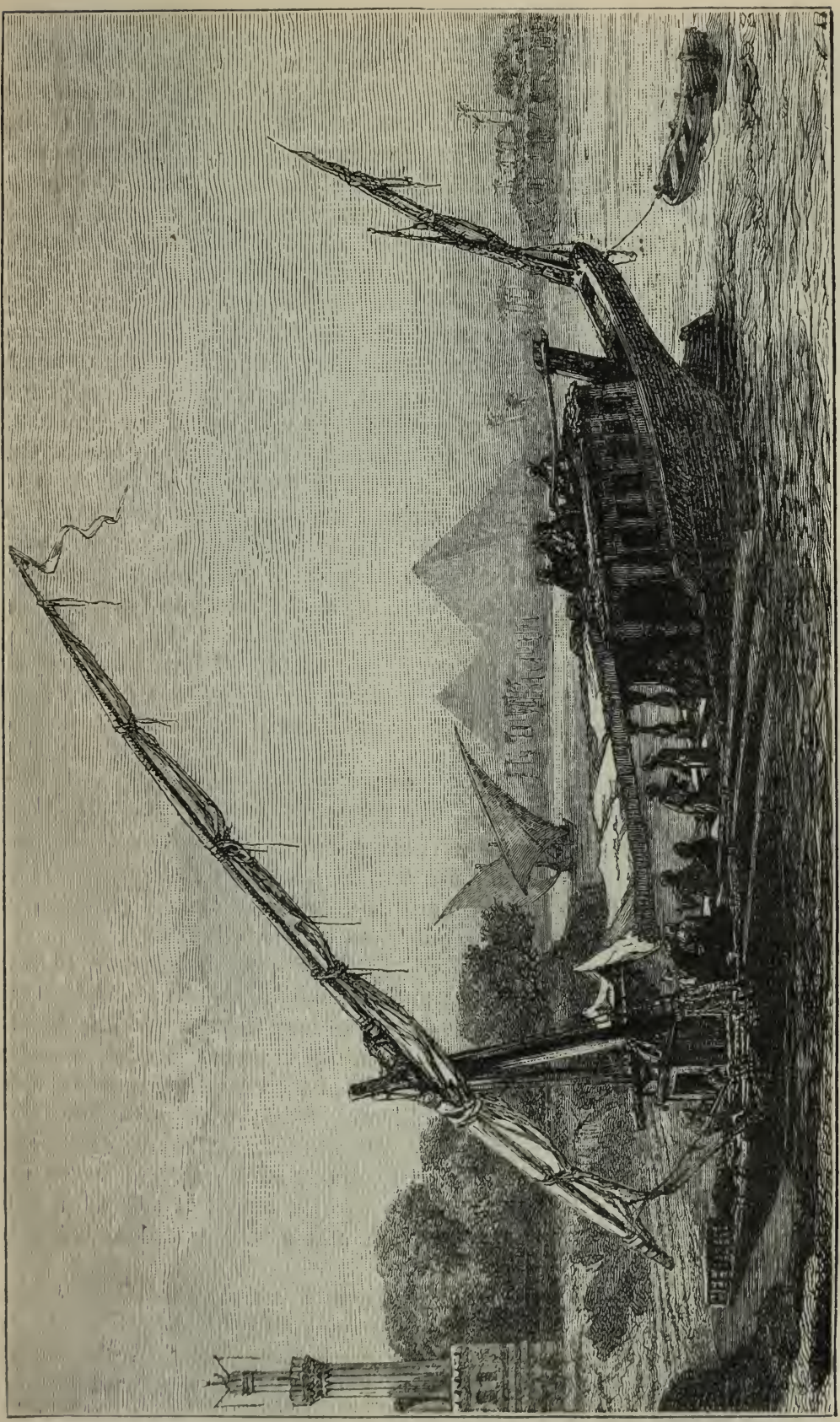
Tomb of a Mameluke.

pointed arch of the beautiful and distinguishing horseshoe form. There are two large arches facing each other and two smaller arches, all constructed in alternate blocks of black and white marble, whilst red and white stripes appear on the upper walls. Thus the eye is at once arrested, but not dazzled or offended by a sense of colouring. This effect is very much added to by the windows and rosettes, filled in with coloured glass. A great part of this glass is modern, but well-chosen, whilst one or two of the windows still retaining the ancient glass are of such exquisite and refined beauty, such marvellous tracery, that they remain upon the memory almost as the crowning point of the whole building. Unfortunately they are falling into ruin: their delicate outlines are crumbling away. The ceiling is divided into beautifully sculptured panels or compartments, richly painted and gilded. The panels of the Kibla and Manbarr are ornamented with rich marble mosaics.

Behind the sanctuary is the tomb-chamber, small, but of most singularly graceful proportions. Here the windows with their perfect tracery will again at once arrest atrention, for they are wonderfully sculptured. This chamber is crowned by the dome, which outwardly is so beautiful an object. Inwardly it has been very much neglected, and its beauty is of the past. The form is there, but the splendour of colouring and decoration has faded. In the angles some exquisite pendentives have been restored; rich honeycomb work that for effect has scarcely a rival. This had been gorgeously gilded and painted—the colouring always refined; but it charmed more as an example of its school than as any additional beauty to the chamber. The floor is paved with black and white marble, dignified and effective. On two stones of granite let in, one red, one black, is the impression of a foot, said to be that of Mohammed, brought by Kait-Bey from Mecca. The impressions are neither small nor beautiful, but are treated with great reverence; the one being sheltered by a wooden canopy, the other by a small bronze dome.

Thus the tomb-mosque of Kait-Bey may be taken as a rare and unrivalled example of beauty and perfection. Cairo possesses nothing better, and indeed it is for such buildings as these that Cairo may consider itself architecturally famous. Apart from its tombs and mosques, its buildings are not remarkable. The tomb of Kait-Bey has even been compared with the Alhambra of Spain, which is said to possess nothing so perfect. But the comparison will scarcely hold good. Each may stand independently of the other: the famous Moorish palace holding its own from every romantic point of view, whilst the small mosque-tomb reposing outside the walls of Cairo, overlooking the Pyramids, the windings of the far-famed Nile, the plains of the boundless desert, is equally unrivalled in its situation, and possesses all the glamour, all the mystic atmosphere, that surrounds the sacred buildings of the long-past ages of the world.

"Did I not tell you that our visit to the Tombs of the Caliphs



DAHABEEYEH ON THE NILE.

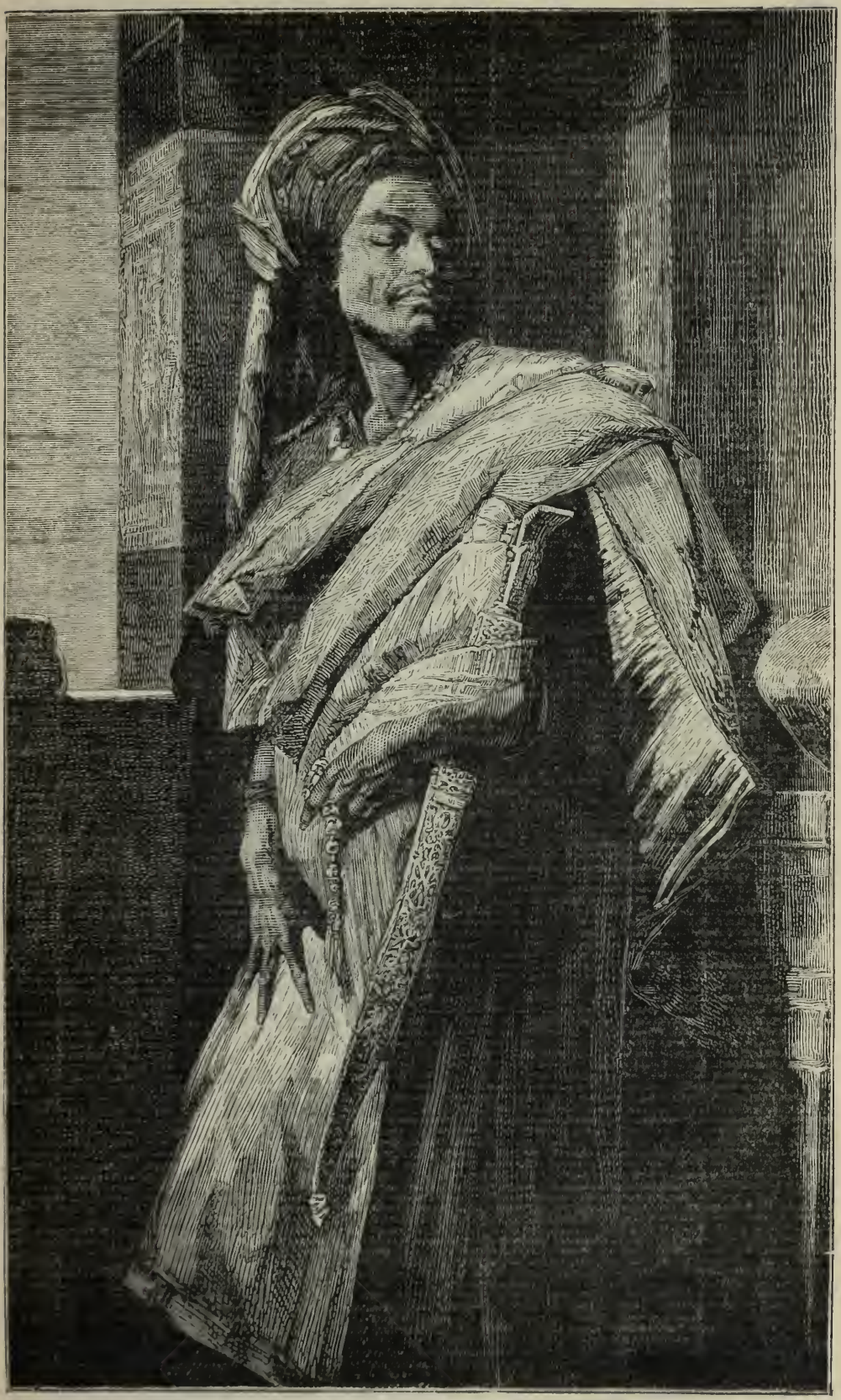
would not disappoint you?" said Osman, as we were taking a las look at the interior of Kait-Bey. "See the harmony of all this detail, the perfection of proportions, the blending of colours, the subdued light, the marvellous tints flowing through those rich windows. There is nothing that you could change for the better. Comparatively small, its completeness gives you all the impression, all the delight, of a building infinitely larger. Those wonderful horseshoe arches have a feeling of lofty expanse about them, as well as great beauty and refinement. The niches beyond seem as vestibules leading into halls 'immeasurable to man,' like the Caverns of Kubla Khan. And to carry out the simile, our 'sacred river' is not far off," he smiled. "Everything here has been planned, proportioned, and adjusted with the consummate power of genius. In vain would our architects of the present day endeavour to match this. We have none of the greatness of the middle ages. And the greatness of the days to come will consist of vastness without beauty. That new world of America is gradually influencing the Old World; they have large ideas, and for the most part are able to carry them out; but their field is limited. Beauty, refinement, everything that charms and delights the cultivated eye and taste—to all this we must bid farewell."

"Will there not come a change?" we asked. "The history of the world seems nothing but a series of reactions; of waking up from lethargy; of falling asleep after great efforts. Human nature falls into extremes."

"Perhaps so," he returned. "Genius exhausts itself, and then human nature must, so to say, lie fallow for a time. It is hard to tell what may be going on a century hence. Science will so have developed that to all intents and purposes it will be a new world. I always feel that I was born a hundred years too soon. I should love to be here, just to see what is going on, in the year 2000."

We left the tomb-mosque of Kait-Bey with infinite reluctance. The door closed behind us, and separated us from a wonderful vision: the presentment of a dream rather than a waking reality. But it was only to pass out to another vision, another wonder. Surrounded by these marvellous Tombs of the Caliphs, crumbling walls and lofty dome and tapering minaret rising with such unearthly beauty and majesty, such solemnity and repose, against the clear unbroken sky. Here one might gaze day after day and never tire. And in their own especial way—we cannot repeat it too often—the Tombs of the Caliphs are a dream and a vision, and a matchless wonder.

"How many charmed hours have I spent here!" exclaimed Osman—we were passing the mosque-tomb of Barkook at the moment—"lost to everything on earth excepting these immediate surroundings. Early morning before sunrise; the pure and peaceful hour of sunset, the witching hour of night, when a full moon has thrown down her pale and silvery light upon this dead world, flooding



MAMELUKE CHIEF.

cupola and minaret, decaying wall and melancholy court with her 'divine effulgence!' I have seen and watched all phases, all hours of the twenty-four; sometimes mounting one of those minarets and looking down upon the sleeping moonlit scene, feeling as if I had ceased to be an inhabitant of earth, and was about to soar into the 'realms Elysian,' represented by the stars shining in such terrible and eternal silence out of that dark impenetrable sky, from whence we gain no sight or sound of the glorious world beyond. They are so far off!" he cried, a strange pain in his tones. "So far off, so much above us, so unapproachable! How often have I prayed that for a moment the heavens would open to me, and reveal for one instant all the glories that have not entered into the heart of man. And I have watched hour after hour for a sign; and none has come, presumptuous man that I am! And if it had come, so would have come my last moment, for mortal eye may not behold these glories and live. For the rest, why seek it; we have the evidence in ourselves. —Ah! there is our carriage, patiently waiting where we left it; our good servants without even a change of attitude; troubled with no such thoughts as these; satisfied with life and their limited ideas of happiness. They have no wishes unfulfilled, for their life consists only in the abundance of the things by which they are surrounded. This evening I have no engagement. I have kept myself free that we may spend it together. You must dine with me. If you are not engaged there is no impediment; if you are engaged, you must rise above circumstance. Look upon this as a royal command. We will all three come later on, and from the top of yonder minaret survey this wonderful dead city in the dead of night. You have seen the Alhambra by moonlight; you shall now see the Tombs of the Caliphs under the same magical influence, and draw comparisons. Has it not been a charming morning? And I, who have seen the tombs for the hundredth time, have enjoyed them as much as you who had never seen them before. Nay more; your hundredth visit will charm you also more than your first. So true is it that a thing of beauty is a joy for ever."

So we passed away from the Tombs of the Caliphs; the visit, together with the charm of Osman's companionship and conversation, leaving an impression upon mind and imagination that could never pass away. Very soon we were once more bowling rapidly through the crowded streets, the familiar scenes of Cairo. Behind us, the citadel with the dome and slender shafts of the mosques of Mohammed Ali, reared its lofty head towards heaven. All traces of the Tombs of the Caliphs had disappeared, shut out by the surrounding houses. From our mental vision, however, they would never fade. The streets were even more full of life and animation than when we had passed through them in the earlier morning. The money-changer was still at his post, in the very same attitude of watchfulness and eager expectation: like an eagle that, hovering over a flock of sheep, selects

its prey, and then waits its opportunity. The water-carriers and confectioners were loud in their efforts to find customers; the date sellers were whisking the importunate flies from their bread, seated behind their braziers, and patiently biding their time. "*Tout vient à qui sait attendre*,"—how true the proverb, if men would only realize and act up to it. Copts and Jews and Greeks elbowed and hustled each other, passing in and out of the bazaars, up and down the Mouski: their many-coloured turbans looking like a flower-bed in commotion. It was all wonderfully vivid and Eastern; all the Arabian Nights over again.

"You have nothing like this in the Western world," said Osman as we passed into the regions of the Esbekeeyeh Gardens on the way to our hotel—leaving the crowd behind us in the Mouski. 'Everything there pales before the gorgeousness of our Eastern life and customs. In comparison, your Western imagination is cold and dead. The difference is not greater than between your skies and these"—pointing upwards to the wonderful heavens, which in their height and depth and clearness—the wonderful golden glow which surrounded the sun and found its reflection on all things about us—certainly presented a picture never seen under the skies of Europe.

"This is all very well," laughed Osman, as he bade us good-bye for the moment. "Here you have a gorgeousness and magnificence of colouring that is not to be rivalled; it is well; it is overpowering. But wait until to-night. Wait until we find ourselves on the summit of one of those minarets, and gaze down upon a sleeping and a dead world reposing under the soft and gentle influence of the Queen of Night. If you have any poetry in your soul, then it will awaken. You will be a new being in a new world; and if you are like me, you will almost desire never to re-awaken to real life. Is not this romantic for a hard-headed diplomatist, who spends his working hours in financial problems, in interviewing monarchs, in abetting or avoiding wars, in influencing in his own small, individual way, the course of the tide that rules the world! But we are all dual beings. There is the impassive shell that faces the world and society and work, passing through life masked and cold and formal; and there is our own true self, which is kept for our solitary hours and for a select few, when we are not afraid to give expression to our higher aspirations, all our enthusiasm, all our hopes and dreams and visions; when we can stand, as it were, face to face and soul to soul with our chosen friend, and speak openly of the beauties of this world, the hopes and joys of the next; all those thoughts and themes which lie hidden in the depths of our inner consciousness, and are too sacred to be lightly disturbed. *A rivederci!* You will be with me at eight o'clock, and you will not expect the magic that I promised you in Constantinople. Our only magic to-night will lie amongst the Tombs of the Caliphs. But how glorious will it be!"

MR. WARRENNE:

MEDICAL PRACTITIONER.

A Story Retold.

Introduction.

THE village of Erlsmede, about forty miles from London, was rather remarkable for the beauty of its situation and that of the country round.

It was built upon high ground—so high, that the tower of the old church was a sort of landmark for many miles round. But the situation of the village was not too exposed; it was sheltered on all sides by trees of unusual size and antiquity. The prettiest lane in all the country was to be found leading out of this little village, down to the high London road. The hedges were deep thickets, always untrimmed, of hawthorn and hazel, overgrown with many a drooping plant of woodbine and wild-rose; while here and there a rough oak lifted its head above the bushes, and stretched its gnarled boughs over the road. The lane was always shady, always quiet; it was a slow and long ascent, though winding, and there was the choice of another road for the few carts and carriages bound to Erlsmede. The sun might chequer the path, and the thrushes sing in the deep shade of the hawthorns for many hours in the day, without a witness.

One bright morning, early in June, two little girls, of ten and twelve years old, were slowly loitering down the lane. They were dressed with great simplicity, in black frocks, and broad straw hats, from which depended long black ribbons. They carried a little wicker basket between them, in which were a few wild flowers. They were both lovely: the eldest with a brilliant complexion—bright contrasts of white and deepest rose—hair of the darkest brown plainly parted from the forehead, deep grey eyes of that steady and subdued brilliancy rarely seen but in the south of Ireland, and which more than any others might deserve the epithet of "starlike," and a figure tall, slight, and full of a graceful energy; the younger girl, less slender, fairer, with a profusion of tangled golden hair hanging over her glowing face, and a beautiful and soft simplicity in her gestures. They paused, and the eldest untied the hat of the younger girl, and lifted it off her brow.

"How hot you are, Alice!"

"And you, too, Maud," said the younger girl, without turning her sleepy hazel eyes towards her sister—instead of which she passed her fingers with a quick, tremulous motion across her forehead. She was blind.

"We shall soon be cool here. Do you feel the wind?" asked Maud.

"Yes; how soft it is. There is some honeysuckle close to us—look!"

"Where? I do not see it. Oh, yes! just behind you. There! I have bent down the branch. Will you like to gather it?"

"Poor mamma!" said the child, pausing in the midst of her occupation, "she was so fond of honeysuckle. Do you remember, Maud, this time last year, we used to go and search the hedges for a piece that was blown, when she was so ill?"

She stopped, not crying, for she never shed tears, but pale and trembling.

"Let us sit down," said Maud; "it is mossy here, under this oak."

Her large, dazzling eyes were swimming in tears, but she had learned already the difficult lesson which all women must learn sooner or later—to control their own feelings for the sake of others. Alice, trembling as a person trembles in an ague, leaned against her sister.

"Hark!" said Maud, trying to divert her sister, "do you hear that thrush? Does not he sing sweetly? Such a merry-looking fellow! Would not Leonard like to have a shot at him?"

"I hear something else," said Alice, raising her head; "horses' feet—two horses. People so seldom come this way."

"No, dear Alice, I hear nothing; if you will hold the basket, I will gather some of those roses. No, don't try to touch them; you will run the thorns into your fingers!"

But so daintily did Alice finger the prickly stems, that she gathered one rose after another without hurting herself. Meanwhile, for she was never mistaken, two horsemen came trotting rapidly towards the girls.

"Ah, Maud! The horses! Keep close!" cried Alice, pressing to her sister. Alice was very timid, for she had not been born blind.

But though the two girls stood close up to the hedge, one of the horses, coming quickly upon them, shied all across the lane, and then became unmanageable. Such a perversely restive animal had never come out of a stable since the days of Bucephalus.

Maud, with a sudden energy that supplied the place of strength, swung her sister a few feet up the bank, and held her there with one hand, while she looked bravely round at the threatened danger; her slender foot firmly planted forward, and her lovely face all in a glow, partly from alarm, and partly from the exertion of her attitude.

Meantime the horse leaped in the air, stood on his hind-legs, ran round in circles, and sometimes kicked out at a large Newfoundland dog, which, to complete the confusion, flew barking and bounding round the restive animal.

"Call your dog off!" cried Maud, waving her hand to the rider, who seemed to sit as comfortably as if he were in an armchair, and who rather encouraged the gambols of his four-footed friend, by spurring him repeatedly.

Alice, pale and silent from excess of terror, clung to her sister.

"Nelson, down!" said the horseman in a quick, sharp tone. The dog crouched almost at the feet of the sisters.

It was now the fancy of the horse to stand stock-still. The rider, who might have been about eighteen years old, dismounted carelessly, picked up the basket which Maud had dropped, and presented it to her. The other rider, a few years older than himself, who had prudently kept back his horse during the scuffle, now rode slowly forward.

"Maud—the horses?" said Alice, inquiringly, stretching out her hands.

"Quite still—standing in the road; don't be frightened any more," said Maud, helping her sister down from the bank.

The young man, who had dismounted, stood with one arm thrown over his horse's neck, watching the children attentively: Alice still trembling—Maud holding both her hands.

"Were *you* frightened, eh?" he asked, in a clear, quick tone, looking earnestly at Maud.

"Yes, for my sister; she is blind," said Maud, turning her large eyes straight upon the stranger's face.

"Good," said he, quickly. Then, after a short pause, "*Is* she blind?"

"Yes," said Maud, sorrowfully.

"You don't say so! May I have this?" he asked, taking a bit of honeysuckle from the basket.

"If you please," replied Maud, colouring; and then, taking her sister's hand, she led her quietly away, without again regarding the horsemen.

"I say, O'Neill," said the young man, mounting his horse.

"Well?"

"I like her—the tallest; she is very pretty—the sort of girl I should like to marry."

"If she were not so young," said the other, riding forward.

"She will grow older, I conclude," said the first speaker, drily, as he fastened the honeysuckle into his button-hole. "There is a little of the lion about her; but I think I rather like that."

CHAPTER I.

THE WARRENNES AT HOME.

Mr. Warrenne was a medical practitioner. Early in the century, when our story opens, this term was of comparatively modern date, and was applied to the pariahs of the medical profession—men who were compelled to unite the acquirements of a physician with those of a surgeon. Impossible to be more highly educated, impossible to be worse remunerated, than the medical practitioner at that time. In a country where wealth was the sole standard

of social position, and where talent was comparatively disregarded, the condition of the medical practitioner, and still more, the condition of his family, was far from enviable. He might enjoy the confidence of his patients; he might possibly be admitted to the tables of the higher classes in the neighbourhood. But his family held an uncertain and slippery position, the most trying to the manners and the most teasing to the temper that can be conceived. No gentleman ought then to have entered this profession. He was galled and wounded at every step. He found success evade his grasp like the rainbow, unless he could descend to a multitude of wretched frauds which no gentleman can ever learn to practise. And a large number of medical practitioners not being gentlemen, he found the greater part of his practice swept out of his hands by artifices which excited his disdain, but which equally emptied his pocket. For Mr. Warrenne was a gentleman. His family traced their origin to one of those hardy pirates of the Mediterranean who founded some of the oldest French and Italian houses.

One of his ancestors had served in the Court of Charlemagne, and it had been his particular duty to hand the inkstand to the accomplished monarch, when he affixed, literally, his sign-manual to papers of state. A descendant of this man had migrated to England, after the capture of Robert, the Conqueror's son, and another Warrenne had brought from the Holy Land the crest (the panther's head erased) which was in use in the family at the present day.

But Mr. Warrenne's great-grandfather ran through every acre that belonged to the family, and so put a finishing stroke to the gentility of the house. Mr. Warrenne's father was recommended by a relation to engage in the medical profession, and in an evil hour he complied. He had enjoyed a flourishing practice in the neighbourhood, where his son now followed in his steps. But various causes had contributed to diminish the number of Mr. Warrenne's patients. Some old and staunch friends had died; but many families had withdrawn from his care, some because his politics varied from their standard of excellence, and others because his religious views were neither factious nor factitious enough to meet the exact wishes of the more enthusiastic among his patients; for it was a recognised fact that a medical man might think only about his pills and potions, and was not permitted to form or to express an opinion on the two most important interests of mankind—*for*, we live in a free country.

It was comfortable to Mr. Warrenne to reflect that he had never lost a patient except from a cause that was honourable to himself; but this consolation would not put money in his purse.

Happily he had enough to subsist upon, even though fortune had played him a more slippery turn—and this made him unpopular. People were very angry when they found that they could not starve the man, do what they would.

The eldest son had died. He had four children now living; the

eldest of these was a surgeon in the Company's service, the second was about to accept a situation as clerk in a merchant's house, the two youngest were girls—already introduced to the reader; but now, where my story begins, almost grown to women.

His wife, a woman of remarkable beauty, had died of consumption many years back, under singular and painful circumstances. Her disorder had appeared to be arrested, and Mr. Warrenne had left her for a few days without hesitation to transact some business of importance in London. The night before his return she died. Alice, the youngest child, was sleeping with her, and on waking in the morning, discovered that she was motherless. The terror struck her blind; but her blindness was not immediate; she was attacked by amaurosis, and in a few weeks was deprived of sight.

There was not a ray of hope for her recovery; all the skill of science could avail nothing in that form of the complaint. A few years afterwards, and another affliction visited the family. The eldest son, who was preparing for orders, and who had gained high honours at college, was seized with brain fever, and carried to the grave at the end of a few weeks. Mr. Warrenne never mentioned his name, and any allusion that might suggest his memory would render him grave and silent for hours. When his wife died, he withdrew at once from all attempt at society—he had experienced the unsatisfactory nature of their irregular and embarrassed interchange of visits with the neighbours—and he was too glad to put a stop to it at once. His beautiful daughters, therefore, stood a great chance of remaining on his hands—they went to no balls, and gave no dinners—but Mr. Warrenne liked their company, and he had laid up some money that he might not be under the necessity of selling them.

But they were very happy, considering. Mr. Warrenne had given them an education very much above their station, and this circumstance, together with the old pirate blood that would sometimes stir in their veins, prevented their being quite so humble as their position required. The retired hosiers on the Hill often remarked that those Warrennes did not seem to know their places; but this must have been partly a conjecture of the hosiers, because they merely saw the Warrennes passing to church, or walking in the evenings among the surrounding lanes.

They lived in an old white house roofed with tiles, which stood in a sort of courtyard with large chestnut trees overshadowing the front windows. A passage paved with coloured tiles ran through the house, and terminated in a door, half glass, which opened into the garden; a long straight strip of ground divided by an old wall from the orchard, a square plot of the deepest and greenest turf, was bordered by a belt of trees and evergreens, that served as a screen to divide the kitchen-garden from that appropriated to flowers. Never was such a wall for all kinds of choice fruit—peaches, nectarines, apricots, and the finer kind of plums—never was such a gay parterre

as the border beneath that south wall—never were peas and strawberries, and all sorts of vegetables and fruit in earlier profusion than in that garden. And it was tended by a very singular image of old Adam—a hump-backed German, who, having followed Mr. Warrenne home from Leyden many years back, when he had given himself a six weeks' holiday to the Continent, had remained a fixture in the family ever since, and was likely so to continue as long as he lived.

The other remarkable character on the premises was Mr. Warrenne's white horse, who is destined to play an important, though unconscious, part in this history.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE SHRUBBERY.

But though the Warrennes did not give dinners, they had one or two friends. The Creswicks, whose grounds were only divided from their garden by a narrow lane, were their nearest neighbours; and though they employed Mr. Warrenne in a medical capacity, were disposed to be courteous to his family.

Colonel Creswick was a frightful little man, with an immense red nose, and a row of long yellow teeth, which he was always displaying. He intended his gestures to be very insinuating; and it is possible that a strong-minded person might contemplate him without a shudder. Mrs. Creswick was very tall, and so extremely thin that it was astonishing how she contrived to exist. Her hair, once as black as night, was now perfectly grey; her eyebrows, drawn straight above her dark-blue eyes, still retained their raven hue. Her forehead was wide and noble; her nose very thin, and of a bad outline; her mouth firm, with thin, flexible lips, always fast closed in repose. While you spoke to her, those searching eyes were fixed steadily on your face, watching every shade of expression; but you could never detect a movement on her part which seemed to denote that she breathed. It was almost terrible: it was the face of an accusing spirit; and a person would be very bold to hazard a falsehood beneath the gaze of that earnest countenance.

The Colonel and herself were always scrupulously polite to each other. He called her madam—sometimes dearest madam—and bent his hideous face sideways, like a bird, when he addressed her; and she replied in few words, civil, calm, and stern, which had usually the effect of reducing him to silence. Maud Warrenne used to think that there was some fearful mystery between them; but the mystery was—the marriage of two persons so dissimilar.

They had no children; but Mrs. Creswick's brother, a gentleman high in the civil service in India, had begged that she would take the charge of his only daughter, until he returned to England. She accepted the office, and received the young lady at the Ferns, during

the pauses of her education at a very expensive finishing school. But, an heiress and a spoilt child, Florence Reynolds had formed her own character without Mrs. Creswick's assistance. At the age of eighteen she left school, and came to reside permanently with her aunt, until her father should arrive to claim her. She had, for the last six years, been learning everything, and therefore it is needless to remark that she knew nothing; but she was a beauty as well as an heiress, and her ignorance rather enhanced her attractions with the reasoning sex.

It had been the wish of Mrs. Creswick to encourage an intimacy between Maud Warrenne and her niece; but there existed no good understanding between these young ladies. Florence, proud of her beauty, her fortune, and the marked deference always paid to her expectations by her aunt's guests, was not ambitious to cultivate the acquaintance of the daughter of their medical man; and, perhaps, with all her vanity, it sometimes crossed her mind that Maud, in her white frock and straw bonnet, was superior to herself in intelligence, in character, and even in beauty. Maud, therefore, was subject to the heiress's scornful indifference, or, still more galling, to her punctilious condescension. Keenly sensible of the difference in their fortunes, and still more deeply conscious of the older blood that her own family could boast, she bore the obnoxious manners of Miss Reynolds in haughty silence; and would never have crossed her path, but for the sincere affection she felt for Mrs. Creswick.

Maud had fulfilled her early promise of beauty. At eighteen she was an exquisite specimen of the Norman style, which is directly opposed to the attributes of Grecian beauty. The long slender neck, the elegant, but almost attenuated limbs, the slight flexible waist, are entirely distinct from the full and massive undulations of the Greek form. Her dark grey eyes, with their long eyelashes, looked almost black by candle-light. Her Norman nose, sharply defined, and raised boldly from the face, with high, well-cut nostrils, and the fine, slight expression of her upper lip, gave a spiritual outline to her countenance; while her dark brown hair and eyebrows seemed almost painted upon her clear, broad forehead, so striking was the contrast of their colour.

Florence Reynolds was rather above the middle height, by no means slight in her person, though her waist was beautifully small. She had a remarkable profusion of the very lightest brown hair, almost of a flaxen colour—long, half-opened blue eyes, a high slight nose, and a mouth the colour of a rose-leaf. Her complexion was dazzling—of Saxon fairness, which the slightest exercise dyed with a brilliant flush; and her toilet (a considerable item in the catalogue of a beauty) was always costly and well-chosen. Had Maud been able to dress as expensively as Miss Reynolds, and had her position been as defined, it is probable that the number of their admirers would have been equally divided. As it was, Florence was every-

where recognised as a great beauty, and Maud now and then spoken of as a pretty girl.

Florence was an accomplished coquette. She had the art, by a thousand soft and indefinite means of attraction, of increasing the effect of her personal charms; and very few men were ever in her society without being, at least for a time, intoxicated by the singular fascination of her manner. She had already refused several proposals which she had invited by every means in her power, but which appeared to cause her very great astonishment when they really came. She could not be accused of seeking to marry; she enjoyed too much this unprincipled use of her influence; confident that it would be always in her power to make a splendid match when she should be weary of breaking hearts.

But among her numerous admirers, she had not one more sincere or more disinterested than Leonard Warrenne. When he first returned from Switzerland, where he had spent two or three years in acquiring the modern languages, he found himself always a welcome guest at the Ferns. Mrs. Creswick extended to him the regard she entertained for his sister; and Colonel Creswick was glad to see any one at dinner with whom he could gossip. He was constantly inviting him, and thus he was thrown into the dangerous way of Miss Reynolds. For some time he contented himself by a distant and silent admiration of her dazzling person—but this mute worship was very little suited to the imperious taste of Florence. She suddenly thawed in her manner, which had at first partaken of the icy nature of her intercourse with his sister, and engaged him frequently in conversation, sometimes careless and airy, and sometimes verging upon the sentimental.

For some time Leonard had the comfort of imagining that he simply felt an interest in observing her character, which he fancied to be singularly engaging. He thought she was judged hardly, and misunderstood by those who pronounced her to be heartless, and artful, and vain. He considered Mrs. Creswick, with her stern and immovable ideas of integrity, to be wholly unfitted to pass judgment on the capricious and delicate shades of her niece's character. But these fine Platonic investigations ended, as they always do end—in an ardent, though in this case, hopeless attachment. He never for a moment dreamed of aspiring to the hand of the wealthy heiress—he was aware that his situation rendered such hopes out of the question. But he fancied, like a very young man, that he could remain under all circumstances devoted to her service; that like a knight of the ancient chivalry from which he has descended, he might hold himself for ever bound to obey her slightest wish, without a hope of any future recompense. He saw that she was aware of his passion, and that she did not appear offended by a devotion at once so absolute and so unpresuming. But these fanciful visions were destined to be somewhat rudely interrupted.

Mr. Warrenne, who had for some months been looking out for a situation for his son, at length obtained one in the house of a Mr. Thomason in London. It was necessary that Leonard should set off directly to begin his duties; and the day before he left he called, as a matter of course, at the Ferns, to take leave of the Creswicks.

As he crossed the lawn to go up to the house, he saw Florence walking at a little distance under the trees, leading her pet dog by her side in a blue ribbon. A slight degree of bashfulness at the sight of his "bosom's lord" made him hesitate an instant before approaching her.

But Florence was, fortunately, oppressed by no such timidity.

"Good-morning, Mr. Leonard," said she, coming slowly towards him, and shaking hands with the most friendly air in the world. "If you did not recognise *me*, I think, at least, you might remember Fidelio!"

"It is impossible that I could fail to recognise you," said Leonard; "but I thought you might, perhaps, wish to be alone."

"Oh! I don't consider you an interruption," returned Florence, graciously.

"How well Fidelio is looking!" said Leonard. "I think his coat must now be white enough to content you; it is like swansdown."

"Yes; my present maid consents to wash him every morning. You know that was the parting point with Anaise; and Aunt Creswick vexed me so by taking her side. That is the worst of people who live in the country. They have such limited notions. But your sister is not with you to-day?"

"No," said Leonard; "she was engaged with Alice."

"I cannot tell how it is, but your sister and I do not get on together," said Florence.

A bystander might have remarked that unless Maud had a rather unusual fancy for being the recipient of all Miss Reynolds' varieties of pride and temper, it was not likely that she would get on with her very fast.

"She is afraid of you," said Leonard, smiling.

"No! but am I so very formidable?" asked Florence, with an arch smile.

"Very," replied Leonard, with expression.

Florence coloured, and turned to look after her dog.

"But you were walking?" said Leonard.

"Yes; just loitering about," returned Florence, moving towards the shrubbery as she spoke. "It is pleasanter here than in the house; don't you think so?"

"Much pleasanter," said Leonard.

"The fact is, that I was glad to made my escape from the drawing-room," resumed Florence. "We have been having rather a

cloudy interview; a council of three upon the merits of Sir Frederic Manning."

This sort of confidence was not unusual with Florence, for, with that kind of openness which Bacon pronounces to be uncomely, she gave publicity to her affairs by discussing them with any intimate acquaintance; nor was she, in the present instance, quite correct in her statement, for the discussion had not so much turned upon the merits of Sir Frederic, as upon the demerits of her conduct towards him; Mrs. Creswick having taken upon herself to expostulate with her upon the undue encouragement she had given that gentleman; while the Colonel sometimes complimented "dearest Madam" upon her delicacy and penetration, and sometimes shifted round and defended the harmless levity of his "fair, but capricious niece."

"I have not the honour of an acquaintance with Sir Frederic," said Leonard; "but I hope his merits are very great. They should be surpassing," he added, with fervour, "if they are to meet with the success that report has assigned to him."

Florence sighed deeply, and remained silent a few moments; and then said with a sweet smile:

"Confess, Mr. Leonard, that it is very hard to be subject to the interference of others in an affair of this nature."

"I am sure," said Leonard, with some embarrassment, "that your best friends would leave you to the decision of your own heart."

"Ah! but my heart is so exacting, you can't imagine," cried Florence, playfully. "I demand too much ever to be happy in my future lot."

"I trust, at least," said Leonard, earnestly, "that you will never cease to remember how much power rests in your own hands."

"The enviable power of saying 'No'!" returned Florence, smiling. Then, turning towards him with an appearance of the most engaging frankness, she said, "Come, Mr. Warrenne, give me your opinion. I am sure you are a true friend. Here is a gentleman with a very large property, a title—which you know is always an advantage—an excellent character, and, for anything I know to the contrary, a tolerable understanding; and yet I am so perverse, that I cannot manœuvre the possessor of all these advantages into an interesting point of view! *Que faire?*"

"You do not seriously ask my advice," replied Leonard; and, with all his enthusiasm, he felt somewhat chilled that she should propose such a question to him; knowing, as he felt she did, his sentiments towards herself. "I am sure that *you* must look upon a marriage of convenience with unmixed feelings of abhorrence—

> "The weariest and most loathèd worldly life,
> That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
> Can lay on Nature, is a Paradise"

compared to such a fate."

"But you are so romantic!" cried Florence, shaking back her long ringlets, and looking softly up to him; "I never met with such a Paladin in all my life!"

"Miss Reynolds," said Leonard, stopping short, and taking a sudden resolution, "I came to-day to take leave of you; and some freedom may, perhaps, be allowed or forgiven to me in parting. I think you have not now to learn how deeply I am devoted to your interest; nor at what expense of my own, I would, if it were possible, secure your happiness; and this—you may believe me—without a thought of ever presuming to expect from you the recompense even of a smile. It is not likely that you should ever be placed in a situation where you could derive benefit from my services; but if such a time should come, give me the pleasure—the consolation of knowing that you would call upon me for my exertions with as much frankness as if you summoned a brother to your aid."

Leonard, half frightened at his own boldness, and breathless with excitement, waited for her reply.

Florence burst into laughter.

"Really, Mr. Leonard," said she, "you exceed every hero I ever read of! I only wish I were the Princess Micomicon, that I might reply to you in the same strain! I am quite sorry that you are going; for we might have enacted quite a little melodrame together, to enliven the awful solitude of Erlsmede."

Leonard felt for an instant as if a thunderbolt had fallen at his feet and shivered his airy castles into fragments; and no one can describe the pain that can sometimes be compressed into a few moments.

He felt that he could have forgiven her for not loving him, but *not* or proving herself unworthy of his love. For it was unworthy to receive with scorn as sincere a tribute as was ever laid at the feet of beauty.

But he collected himself, just as the silence began to grow embarrassing.

"I have yet another favour to ask of you, Miss Reynolds," he said, calmly, "which I trust you will consider less extravagant than my last; it is, that you will kindly present my compliments to Colonel and Mrs. Creswick, and express my regret that I had not time left to bid them farewell."

Then taking off his hat, and bowing deeply, before Florence could recover from her surprise at this transition of manner, he crossed the lawn and disappeared among the trees.

CHAPTER III.

THE LAST NIGHT.

It was evening, and Mr. Warrenne and his family were assembled in the drawing-room. Mr. Warrenne was writing at a table by the light of a single lamp, surrounded by books and notes, by leaves of manuscript, and all the litter of an author. A beautiful branch of a tropical creeper with purple blossoms, was placed in a small jar of Bohemian glass, and fell trailing upon the table-cover.

Mr. Warrenne was engaged in a botanical work, to which he devoted almost every moment of his leisure time. He was very tall and thin, with a bald forehead—retaining much of the old-fashioned courtesy in his manner, which the remarkable gentleness of his voice and disposition prevented from being formal. He was remarkably independent in his habits; it was his way to rise and light his own fire always at four o'clock in the morning, all through the winter—and had he been ever so rich, he would very ill have borne to let it be done for him by a servant. Not a line of copy would he ever suffer Maud to transcribe either for his great work on botany, or for the numerous contributions which he sent to scientific or medical journals. He was a philanthropist in the purest and truest sense of the word—a philanthropist who did not neglect the claims of his own fireside, in an abstract zeal for the advancement of society. In his earnest endeavour to elevate the character and improve the comfort of the working classes, to which some of his smaller works were devoted, he had not forgotten to do all that is in the power of a parent to elevate and improve the characters of his own children. He had given them the best education that his utmost means would allow; and had set before them, both by precept and example, those serious duties, and that high tone of feeling, without which the most accomplished education is of little worth. The consequence was that Mr. Warrenne's children were refined—not in the fineness of their cambric handkerchiefs, or the cut glass of their dressing-cases, but in a sense of honour that in these days would be considered as fastidious, and a sensibility to the feelings of others, which is the true *morals* of good breeding, and a very agreeable substitute for etiquette.

Leonard and Maud were walking up and down the room together arm-in-arm. Alice, seated in the shade, was playing a *motivo* from one of Beethoven's masses on a very fine harmonium. Her rounded figure, her dazzling complexion, and bright rings of brown sunny hair, all looked soft and indistinct in the dim light. Leonard, although very like Maud, had not his sister's pretensions to regular beauty—his features were less critical—his complexion much darker—and his short black hair and marked brows were wanting in the splendid

texture and colouring that distinguished hers; but he had the same brilliant eyes and glittering teeth, and his figure, hardly taller than Maud's, possessed the same elegance of form and gesture.

"What a beautiful movement that is!" said Leonard, stopping in his walk near the harmonium. "Do, Alice, play the 'Benedictus' over again."

Alice began to repeat the movement.

"You go to-morrow," said Maud, resting her head on his shoulder. "I can think of nothing else; what *shall* I do without you?"

"But when I was in Switzerland nearly three years, Maud," said Leonard, "you managed to do without me then?"

"I was not so old then," said Maud; "I did not so much feel the need of having somebody to talk to—to tell my troubles to."

"But you know, Maud, a philosopher should rely entirely on the consolations of his own mind!"

"You are like Hamlet, Leonard."

"How so?"

"Your philosophy is just as deep as his; you have a profound saying for every emergency, but you feel exactly like other people all the time."

Leonard smiled, and made no reply to this attack; perhaps the little interview of the morning had taught him that it was not tooth-ache alone that had power to unnerve a philosopher.

"I hope, papa, we don't disturb you, roaming about?" said Maud, as they came to Mr. Warrenne's table in their promenade.

"My dear!—disturb me!" returned Mr. Warrenne, looking up from his writing, and bringing his ideas down by degrees to this present company; "no, not at all, I assure you."

"Well now, Maud," said Leonard, as they crossed back to the harmonium again; "what are your troubles at this present time? Not any very particular ones, I think!"

"Leonard, it is so like a man to think that women have no troubles!"

"I am all attention," said Leonard, smiling; "I only ask for information."

"Well, for instance," returned Maud, "what do you think of Miss Reynolds' behaviour to me?"

"Miss Reynolds!" cried Leonard with a start.

"Oh, I cannot tell you how she annoys me!" said Maud, eagerly; "fifty times I have said to myself that I would never go to the Ferns again and expose myself to the cold insolence of her manners; but I like Mrs. Creswick too well to stay away altogether."

"Did you see Miss Reynolds this morning?"

"Yes; I met her in the garden"

"And how did she behave?"

"Oh, she is a little capricious, you know."

"I understand."

"And then," continued Maud, passing to another subject, "the reports which are spread and believed against papa from time to time —don't you call that a very reasonable ground of complaint?"

"Why, in that respect, my father fares no worse than other doctors," said Leonard; "it is a profession that is calculated to make friends and foes from causes over which the individual has no control. And I agree with you, that no calumny is too extravagant to be believed, especially if it relates to an honest man."

"Very true; but it vexes me all the same," replied Maud.

"It does not vex my father, you see," returned Leonard, "when people circulate a falsehood of extra magnitude about him; he ponders a little, and then sets it down to a partial derangement of intellect on the part of the inventor. He cannot comprehend pure malignity—especially when it is unprovoked."

"He hardly knows the mischief it does him," said Maud.

"I think he does; but he treats it as he would treat a bad crop of potatoes. He would be angry with nobody. I don't think he *could* bear malice. Ah! Maud, when shall you and I have schooled our minds to such an even balance?"

"I should like to see them all burnt!" cried Maud, with a sudden burst of indignation.

Alice stopped playing in wonder; Leonard began to laugh at Maud's eager face; and Mr. Warrenne, looking up from his writing, said quietly:

"No, my dear, you would not," and then addressed himself to his task again.

"I thought," said Leonard, taking a seat beside Maud on the sofa, "that Miss Reynolds looked more beautiful than ever, this morning."

It seemed, that though he had resolved never to think of her again, he could not help talking of her.

"Indeed! What was her dress?" asked Maud.

"Oh, something magnificent—a silk, I suppose; of rose colour mixed with black."

"Ah! that would suit her fair complexion admirably," said Maud.

"Is she not lovely?" exclaimed Leonard.

"Very; nothing can be lovelier," replied Maud.

"And her eyes!—those long blue eyes!" exclaimed Leonard, softening more and more towards Miss Reynolds as he recalled her several attractions.

"I do not like her," said Maud, laughing; "and I have praised her enough. I shall say nothing in favour of her eyes."

"After all," said Leonard, as if thinking aloud, "what allowance should be made for her! So rich, so flattered! It is no wonder that she sometimes forgets to be considerate."

"Leonard, my dear boy," said Mr. Warrenne, looking up from his writing, "I wish you would have the goodness to mend me a pen."

This was one of the few things that his children could manage to do

for him, as his sight was not good enough to mend pens by candle-light. Leonard started up and went to the table.

"It is a singular thing," said Mr. Warrenne, laying down his pen, and making the papers before him straight and square, "it is a very strange fact, and one to which I wish to draw your attention, that, in the vegetable kingdom, we do not find any of the species become extinct, from time to time, as in the animal kingdom. Some specimens are, it is true, very rare, but they do not actually disappear from the face of the earth—Leonard, my dear, this pen is a little too soft—of course I do not now refer to those productions of Nature which existed prior to what is popularly called the creation of the world."

Poor Maud! This last remark brought her to her third trouble. The clergyman of the parish was on very unfriendly terms with Mr. Warrenne, because he believed, in common with Dr. Buckland and most other geologists, that the creation of the earth was antecedent, by many centuries, to the creation of man. It was not enough that he never obtruded his opinions—he held them; and Mr. Ranger hated him with a bitterness that might not seem to be very evangelical. But most people said that of course Mr. Warrenne must have done something wrong; for it was not likely that a clergyman would be prepossessed against any one without good cause.

"Ah! Mr. Ranger, Leonard!" cried Maud, who had forgotten this trouble until the mention of the creation had recalled it to her mind.

Leonard looked up smiling from his pen. "Ay, Maud," he said, "that is rather a more substantial trouble than the little airs of Miss Reynolds, or the gossip of half-a-dozen crazy old women."

"I can't think how it is that we are so beset," said Maud.

"Why, my dear, because we are poor," replied Leonard; "rich people smile and fawn on each other, but they turn their rough side to us; we don't get any of the 'hollow sunshine' some poet speaks of; and I really don't know that we are much the worse for the omission, for when we find a friend he must be sterling."

"Like Mr. Scudamore," said Maud.

"Exactly. By the way, Maud, I half expected he would have called in this evening; for when I went yesterday to bid him good-bye, he was gone to R—— on business, and now I shall go away without seeing him."

"How I shall scold him if he does not come!" said Maud. "Stay, is not that a step?"

"That is Karl coming from the stable," returned Alice. She was always an authority upon footsteps.

"Were you talking of Mr. Scudamore, my dear?" said Mr. Warrenne, looking up a few minutes afterwards.

"Yes, papa."

"I met him this morning, my dear, and he said he would breakfast

with us to-morrow, that he might shake hands with Leonard before he went."

"Oh! that is right, Leonard," said Maud. "You are sure now that you have everything ready?"

"Everything, Maud."

"How often I shall write to you! and Alice too."

"Oh, yes! Take care that Alice writes; don't let her grow lazy."

They all stood round, unwilling to break up and go to bed—the last night.

"My dears," said Mr. Warrenne, as he laid by his manuscript, "do you know what o'clock it is?"

Nobody knew, but nobody moved.

"And we must breakfast at half-past seven, because Leonard starts at eight," continued Mr. Warrenne.

"Yes, papa," said the group.

But while they were hesitating, the matter was settled by Dinah, the housemaid, who popped her round face in at the door, with the formula so familiar to the country practitioner:

"Please, sir, you are wanted."

At this well-known sound, Mr. Warrenne bade a hasty good-night to his children, and followed the round face out of the room. Leonard and Alice consented to go upstairs, and Maud sat down to wait her father's return, and to stifle her tears like a true woman, lest the sight of them should add to his regret.

CHAPTER IV.

STRAWBERRIES AND CREAM.

Mr. Scudamore was the most intimate friend of the Warrennes. He was about fifty years old; still a handsome man, of a stately figure, and a fine imposing carriage. He was remarkably good-natured—not by any means addicted to literature—but as honest and straightforward a man as ever lived. He had been formerly in the Army; but he did not seem to have felt much partiality for that profession, since he sent his two sons to India in the Company's service, and had been heard to declare that he would rather see them sweeping the streets then serving their country. And this, not from any feeling of disloyalty; but from a floating idea that they would find a good crossing a better provision than anything they might pick up under military auspices.

He had a widowed sister living with him. This lady had married a gentleman, who left behind him at his death nothing but a very large amount of debts. Mr. Scudamore had paid his brother-in-law's debts, and had offered his sister a home; and the world, which is famous for its accurate judgments, had given him a reputation for

riches, on account of an action which had greatly diminished whatever he might have before possessed. But Mr. Scudamore did not particularly care what the world said. He was a bit of a good-natured misanthrope; he took to farming with some degree of success, laughed at his sister, whose eccentricities were almost unbounded—encouraged Leonard's philosophy—admired Maud—petted Alice, and was extremely popular with Mr. Warrenne and his family. He it was who, from time to time, gladdened the heart of Mr. Warrenne with specimens of those rare and beautiful flowers which would have been out of his reach but for the zeal of his friend, and he it was who was wanting to complete the breakfast-party on the last morning of Leonard's stay, and whose coming would be positive assurance that it was actually half-past seven o'clock, for his punctuality was infallible.

The morning was bright and fresh—cool enough at that early hour to bring deep roses into Maud's cheeks; for she had been round the orchard prying at the foot of every mossy tree to collect the last violets that still lingered there, to make a cluster for Leonard. It would be long enough before he would get another, with the dew still upon it. Half-past seven would come. Alice had given notice of Mr. Scudamore's approach before any one else had detected his stately step, and Maud began to pour out the tea; not daring to look at Leonard, but trying to talk cheerfully with every one else.

"And so Leonard goes to-day?" said Mr. Scudamore, as soon as he had taken his seat at the table. It was a self-evident truth; but it filled Maud's eyes with tears notwithstanding; she turned away without making any reply.

Poor Mr. Scudamore, who had said, according to his custom, what was uppermost in his mind, and who had possibly meant his remark to be consolatory, now did his best to retrieve his error.

"Well, never mind," said he, taking her hand; "Dick will be over here one of these days."

Dick was his eldest son, in whom he imagined all human perfections to be centred. And it was a proof of his extreme partiality to Maud, that while he gave flowers to her father, and pet-birds to Alice, he always, in his mind's eye, reserved Dick for Maud; and, without exactly intending it, he was constantly apprising her of his intentions. Maud dried her eyes half smiling.

"And how is Mrs. Thorne this morning?" she asked.

"Pretty well, I fancy; the old lady is digging a pit in the cowslip meadow."

"What is she doing that for?" asked Alice.

"I don't know. She and Jack Robins were hard at work all yesterday."

"Tell her I shall come and help her one day soon," said Maud.

"Do," said Mr. Scudamore. "I shall take you both home with me—I have some ripe strawberries for Alice."

"Has the grandfather really some ripe strawberries?" asked Alice. "Why, Karl says that ours are not turning yet."

It was Maud who had fixed the venerable appellation of grandfather upon Mr. Scudamore, because, with a woman's readiness, she had detected that he was still a little vain of his fine appearance; and he bore it very well, conscious that he was many years younger than her father.

And now the coach drew up, five minutes before the hour—and happily coaches give but little time for farewells: the luggage is pounced upon, the passenger hurried in, and the pang of parting cut as short as may be.

"There, he is out of sight now!" said Mr. Scudamore to Maud, who had watched with tearful eyes the rapid progress of the coach along the road until it disappeared among the dewy hedgerows.

"Yes, he is out of sight," repeated Alice, who could no longer hear the wheels.

"What *will* he do in London?" said Maud, in a desponding tone.

"Do?" returned Mr. Scudamore, cheerfully—"make his fortune, to be sure! Come home as rich as a Jew; buy Forrel Court, when Mrs. Jane Digby pleases to shuffle off this mortal coil—and marry the prettiest woman (after yourself) in the county."

Maud had not heard distinctly the last part of this sentence, for Mr. Warrenne had stepped back into the passage to put on his great-coat, and Maud had darted in to help him on with it. Mr. Warrenne always declined this piece of service on her part, but he generally found himself invested in his garment before his sentence was quite finished. And though of course people who have no valets to put on their great-coats are, and ought to be, despised by those who have, I question if Mr. Warrenne would have been half so much pleased with the attendance of a servant as he was with that of his bright-eyed daughter.

Karl now hobbled to the front-door, leading the old white horse, and followed by a beautiful fawn-coloured greyhound, which coursed round the horse and leaped upon him, without in the least disturbing his serenity.

"Shall we take Ondine with us?" asked Maud, as she stooped to caress the greyhound.

"To be sure," said Mr. Scudamore.

"Karl!" said Maud, laughing, "you must make up your mind to go without Ondine for a whole morning."

The old German nodded; and then, drawing the tufted mane of the white horse through his rough hands, he said slowly:

"When the golden youth comes back from London with a great deal of money, the father will have a better horse to ride, young lady."

As Karl neither spoke nor understood more English than was necessary to conduct his small purchases in the village, the conversa-

tions between him and his young ladies always passed in his own language.

"Ey, ey!" repeated Karl, fastening a small steel chain to the collar of the greyhound, and handing the end of it to Alice; "never tell me that the golden youth will not be rich one day."

"But what were you saying just now, grandfather, about pretty women?" asked Maud, as they set out upon their walk.

"About pretty women? Let me see—oh! I was saying that Miss Reynolds was (next to you) the prettiest woman in the county."

"Not exactly that," said Alice. "The grandfather was saying that Leonard would marry the prettiest woman in the county when he came back."

"I hope to goodness that he will never marry Miss Reynolds," cried Maud, "though fortunately there is no fear of that. I hardly know, indeed, if she considers him even worth laughing at!"

"I should not mind taking you a heavy bet of that," said Mr. Scudamore. "Perhaps you do not recollect, Mistress Maud, that where I sit in church I have a perfect view of Miss Reynolds as well as Master Leonard, and I have caught some looks passing."

"There! we see now how the grandfather employs himself in church," said Alice.

"I always knew that he behaved very badly," replied Maud. "You know, Alice, I told you one Sunday that he was making me laugh when the child cried so loud."

"As for you," said Mr. Scudamore, attacking Maud in his turn, "the reason why you dislike Miss Reynolds is very evident; you are jealous of her."

"Oh! grandfather, jealous of Miss Reynolds!" cried Alice.

"If I were jealous of anything, it would be of her beautiful horse," said Maud; "I should so like to ride."

"When you were in India, grandfather, did you ever ride on an elephant?" asked Alice.

"Oh, once or twice; just to say that I had done so; but it is not the usual mode of travelling over there, Miss Alice."

"Alberic went on an elephant to a tiger-hunt," said Alice; "I should so like to ride on one. Oh, you do not know how I long to travel!"

"But, dear Alice," said Maud, "you would have all the fatigue, and none of the pleasure."

"None of the pleasure! Oh, Maud! think of the climate, and the scent of foreign flowers, and the numberless sounds of a tropical country; and a foreign language—only fancy how strange that would be—and the notes of the birds, and the large-leaved trees, and the stir of everything, so different to what we have here; and, of course, somebody to describe to me what was passing. How different to be told at the instant—There go the women with their muslin veils,

carrying their brazen vessels to the tank; and there, farther on, what a flight of many-coloured birds; and now the sky is hot and pink, and the great palm trees are as still as death, and the large white mosque in the middle of the plain is so distinct in the sunlight that you can count every arch: how different this would be on the spot, to hearing it from a book as I do."

"We must ship you out to Alberic," said Mr. Scudamore, laughing.

"I should be a troublesome visitor," said Alice, smiling.

"And, besides, I could not spare you," added Maud.

"Well, well, when Dick comes home we shall see who can be spared," remarked Mr. Scudamore.

"I am sure," said Maud, "I never in my life was so tired of anybody's name as of his; and such a name! 'Dick!'"

"But where is Forrel Court, grandfather?" asked Alice.

"Not know Forrel Court!" said Mr. Scudamore, "to my fancy it is the prettiest place within thirty miles; and they say that Mrs. Jane Digby was altogether as handsome, thirty years ago."

"And who is Mrs. Jane Digby?" asked Maud,

"What! have you never heard your father speak of Mrs. Jane Digby?"

"Never," returned Maud.

"Well, then, you ask him."

"But he won't tell us," said Maud.

"He never tells us any gossip," remarked Alice.

"No; we are obliged to come to the grandfather for all the gossip of the neighbourhood," said Maud.

"And so Mrs. Digby——" continued Alice.

"No, no—a couple of children; you have no business with such stories," said Mr. Scudamore.

"Why, is she an enemy of papa's, like Mrs. Nicholls?" asked Alice.

"Oh no, my dear, nothing of the sort."

"Now, grandfather, don't be provoking," said Maud; "I *will* hear it!"

"Ay, when Queen Maud says she will, there's nothing for it," said Mr. Scudamore. "Well, you must know, then, that old Digby, her father, left the most singular will ever made by man I do believe. She was his only child, and he therefore left her his whole estate and fortune, with this absurd condition—that she should forfeit it all if she ever married. Now, you know it almost looked as if the man wished his daughter to die an old maid; for, though a handsome woman enough, few people would care to take her without so much as an acre of the property."

"Poor Mrs. Digby!" said Maud. "Not one of her admirers was true-hearted enough to stand such a test?"

"I am sure she was better without them then," cried Alice.

"To be sure," said Maud; "only one wouldn't like to be given up"

"But what has papa to do with the story?" asked Alice.

"Ask him," said Mr. Scudamore.

"I am sure, if papa had loved her, he would have married her without any fortune," said Maud.

"But suppose it was what you ladies call an unrequited attachment?" replied Mr. Scudamore.

"Well, and I daresay a great many ladies were attached to papa," remarked Alice simply.

"There—get in both of you," said Mr. Scudamore, putting them both in at the open gate of his garden; "at your age you know nothing at all about such matters I should hope."

"And where will you fasten Ondine that she may not worry your sheep?" asked Alice.

"Just outside the porch; she shall have some dinner when we get our luncheon."

"And some strawberries—just a few, grandfather; she loves strawberries," said Alice.

"Well, she shall have two or three. Hallo! Jack Robins! where is the old lady?"

"If you please, sir," said Jack Robins, a decent farm servant in round hat, smock frock, and leather gaiters, "missus be down in the well."

"In the well?"

"Yes, sir;" and not deeming any explanation necessary, he touched his hair and walked on.

"I suppose she is not drowned, or he would not take it so coolly," said Mr. Scudamore, laughing; "and if she likes to spend her time in the well, I know no reason why one should hinder her. But if you have no objection, we will just go and see what she is about."

They went through the garden into the wood-yard, and so on to the farm-yard, where at the other side, just in front of Jack Robins' cottage, stood the well. As they came up there emerged from the top a very old straw bonnet, tied down with an older silk handkerchief, and further, the whole person of Mrs. Thorne.

"Well, old lady," said Mr. Scudamore, "have you been down to take a peep at the stars?"

"No, brother," said that lady, bounding from the margin of the well to the ground; "but I thought some of the brickwork was loose within, so I made them put down a ladder, and looked to it myself."

"And you are not wet through, I declare," said Mr. Scudamore.

"No; I did not go so low as the water," replied Mrs. Thorne; "there's a brick fallen, brother, and you had better see about it."

Mrs. Thorne was not five feet high, as active as a bird, and an incessant talker. Her eyes were as bright and restless as a hawk's, and her features were tolerably regular. It was impossible to dress in older or more shabby clothes than she did, and this quite as a matter

of choice, for her brother would willingly have supplied her with better, if she could have been induced to put them on; and as she held the purse for house expenses, and at least once a week (according to her own account) saved him from utter ruin, she could have conducted her wardrobe upon different principles, if such had been her pleasure.

"Well, young ladies," said she, turning suddenly upon them. "Neither of you married yet? What a world it is! Nobody marries now. And yet you are not so bad looking; I don't see why you should not pick up somebody, or you either, if you would leave off pretending to be blind."

"Oh, Mrs. Thorne!" said Alice.

"Blind! look at her! No more blind than I am! see how she steers clear of that crib. Is it a cow or a horse feeding there? Eh, Miss Alice!"

"Oh! a cow, Mrs. Thorne; I know that by her breathing."

"Ah! don't tell me; you see her as well as I do. But come in, and let us get something to eat. I am as hungry as a hunter."

The strawberries and cream were ready for them when they went in, with various other good things. Mrs. Thorne did not sit down to table, but walked briskly backwards and forwards, stopping before her plate, and taking a mouthful every now and then, and talking incessantly; and it was one of her peculiarities, that she would carry on a long conversation about persons of whom her audience had never heard, and did not appear in the least annoyed when she found that they were quite in the dark as to the subject of discourse.

"I never saw you looking so well," said Mr. Scudamore as Maud laid aside her bonnet and smoothed back her exquisite hair with her hand;—"your walk has done you good; you have grown too in the last few months. I wish with all my heart that Dick was here at this moment."

"Oh dear!" cried Maud impatiently, the glow on her cheek growing deeper; "I wish you would let Dick alone from this time forth!"

"Yes, and I don't think I was ever so frightened in my life," said Mrs. Thorne, coming to a stand-still for a minute before her plate, "as the day John Butler's horse ran away with him and fell down the chalk-pit. Nobody thought that Eleanor would ever have got over it; I fancied myself she would have gone into a decline; and as Lydia had died of something of the sort, it might almost be said to run in the family; but Livingstone gave us hopes from the first, and if it had not been for that, I don't know how Mrs. Hemmings would have kept up her spirits."

As soon as she had finished this exordium, she set off again walking up and down the room; and every one present being used

to her style, it was not thought necessary to inquire who Mrs. Hemmings, and John Butler, and Eleanor and the others were. As soon as Mrs. Thorne had finished this discursive kind of meal, she drew on her tan gloves, and walked briskly off, leaving Mr. Scudamore to entertain his guests; and he took them to feed the pigeons, and see the youngest calves, and pass judgment on the horses, and pry into the barns, all which proceedings Alice seemed to enjoy quite as much as her sister.

In the course of their wanderings they came upon Mrs. Thorne, who was busy digging a kind of trench in the cowslip meadow in company with Jack Robins; which Mr. Scudamore told her looked very like a grave, and he supposed she was qualifying for the office of sexton when it should be vacant.

Mrs. Thorne flung up a spadeful of earth; told him to mind his own business; and then setting her battered straw bonnet more firmly on her head, she resumed her occupation.

Mr. Scudamore walked home with the girls, and, as they turned into the lane which led to their house, they met a gay riding-party from the Ferns.

Miss Reynolds was among the foremost, on a pretty, slight bay horse; and by her side rode a foreign count, with a formidable beard, to whose discourse she seemed to incline a very attentive ear.

Florence never looked handsomer than on horseback. Her high, close habit set off the outline of her beautiful figure, and the cloud of thick, fair curls that escaped from her hat, gave an air of softness to that masculine *coiffure*. She bowed, coldly enough, as she passed on, and, turning to the Frenchman, made some remark on Maud which seemed to amuse him very much. The little colonel, who was behind with some ladies, reined up, and bestowed some compliments on the sisters, mixed with sly insinuations on Mr. Scudamore for securing such fair companions in his walks.

"And how anybody can think," said Maud, as soon as the colonel was out of hearing, "that Leonard ever cared one straw for that horrid Miss Reynolds—except, indeed, allowing her to be handsome, which we all do."

"And defending her, Maud; you know he always defended her," returned Alice.

"And looking at her in church—I will answer for that part of the story," cried Mr. Scudamore.

"I am sure, if he ever did think of her, I hope he will forget her very name, now he is away from her," said Maud.

"And bring home a rich bride from the ward of Farringdon Without," said Mr. Scudamore.

"Well, that would be one way to shorten his servitude in the great city," laughed Maud, as they reached their gate, and Karl came forward to take charge of his favourite Ondine.

(*To be continued.*)

AN ARTIST'S ROMANCE.

I.

IT was so hot that the oleanders flagged, hanging their pink and white blossoms downwards, in their large green tubs, lower and lower, till they almost touched the curly head of an American girl who sat dreaming under their shade in the balcony they ornamented.

But dreaming is too sentimental a term to apply to any reverie of Maraquita Ward's. Calculating would be a truer expression. She was rehearsing mentally her future plans, while turning over the leaves of her sketch-book, a clever summary of her own smart intellect in grasping sights and scenes.

Her meditations were noisily interrupted by the cling-cling of several bicycles, and down the dusty road, in the full glare of the Italian sunshine appeared, flashing in many coloured "blazers," a robust party of young Englishmen, sent abroad to perfect their education. "Cling, cling," came their bells, and "Cooe, cooe!" shouted their stalwart riders, as with a sudden jerk the bicycles were checked in their wild career through the Piazzetta, in front of its little café.

In a polyglot of their own composing, they demanded of the startled waiter, "drink," "forthwith," and "in buckets;" while the padrone inside, suddenly aroused from his siesta, blinked, and seized his hat, making for the entrance, but was reassured by his subordinate's laconic but perfectly satisfactory explanation, that it was only some thirsty "Inglese."

How well Maraquita knew it all! The Bersaglieri who played dominoes on the bridge, near the group who twanged a mandoline, singing to its accompaniment with their rich Italian voices; the queenly peasant girls coming up from the stream, with their copper pitchers poised on their beautiful upright heads; the old beggar rattling his tin money-box and proclaiming his doubtful blindness; the fruit-seller surrounded by gorgeous melons and golden figs. Colour, music, beauty everywhere.

For two years Maraquita had lived in this atmosphere of life and sunshine, and the time had come now when she was to leave it all, for so her mother had decreed, and against Mrs. Ward's decisions Maraquita knew there was no appeal. Besides, her own opinion coincided with her mother's, and the only question was, how best to put her two years' experience to practical account. Her history may be briefly told. The American war had ruined Mr. Ward, who died fighting on the Southern side; his wife, with her only child, immediately left New Orleans. Mrs. Ward was a Northerner, and

penetrated with the conviction that life without dollars is only a blank. She appealed to her rich brother in New York, and extorted from him, conditionally, a good allowance for three years, ostensibly for the purpose of cultivating in Italy Maraquita's talent for painting, her real intention being that the girl's remarkable beauty should procure her a wealthy husband in the Old World, where beauty is becoming a rarer commodity than in the New.

Maraquita entered fully into her mother's plans, and while working for pleasure, undeniably hard, at her painting, never for an instant intended to toil or spin through life, from necessity.

But now she had before her that evening a trial even beyond her stoical endurance. She felt the struggle coming to her, when love must be sacrificed to ambition; and as she watched the shadows lengthen, she knew when night fell she should have said good-bye to the brightest days of her life.

Mrs. Ward had spent that afternoon on the sofa with her novel, to which she had given a very divided attention; over and over again she asked herself if Maraquita would "behave sensibly" and "not make a scene?" As the hours waned she grew very nervous lest Maraquita should be "weak," as she expressed it; the young man must be interviewed, &c., but she should be thankful when it was over; for did not Mrs. Ward's future ease and comfort depend on her daughter's common-sense in refusing a poor suitor and accepting a rich one?

Even while she thus reflected, the knock at the door was followed by the entrance of "the young man" in person.

Mrs. Ward's worldly handsome face fell, as her hard cold eyes met the frank winning smile of Giuseppe Lanni, the artist. Like all people possessed of an inordinate craving for wealth, she found it impossible to realize that others existed to whom money was not of the same paramount importance; she believed that, once made cognisant of Maraquita's real circumstances, Lanni would relinquish all thoughts of making her his wife. But one glance at his honest guileless countenance told Mrs. Ward how hopeless was any such expectation. Seeing, however, that she must say something, she faltered:

"You had my letter? You have come to say good-bye?"

"I received your letter," he replied steadily; "and I have come, with your consent, never to say good-bye."

What Mrs. Ward would have answered it is useless to surmise, for a voice from the balcony, in clear, decided tones, called, "Come here, Lanni;" adding: "You can trust me, mother."

Seated side by side for the last time, as Maraquita instinctively felt, her heart sank; what she had intended for flirtation had gradually become serious, till love was part of her life. She remembered how little by little the master had become the friend, and how, even though he knew all, that she was poor and almost friendless, he offered her all he had, his great love and devotion. Oh, how he

pleaded; telling her that he felt for her sake he should win fame and wealth. But she never hesitated.

"Lanni," she replied, "do you remember once I told you that I should like to repair the Psyche, and build up the Coliseum? how horrified you were, and how you said you were thankful I had neither the money nor the power to desecrate by such restoration? And you couldn't understand me then, and you would not understand me now. For me there must be no broken statues, no crumbling ruins; my life must be full of riches; nothing sordid or shabby; that I love you I admit, but I am already tired of poverty and contrivances. I realise, however, thoroughly the unselfishness of your character, and the genuineness of your affection, and so I appeal to your kindness. We are going to Paris, where I shall give lessons in painting; your name and introduction will secure my success. Will you give me recommendations to English and American families, as a pupil of yours?"

He bowed, adding, "The letters shall be with you to-night." Then rising, he said with much dignity, "Good-bye, Maraquita. Thank you even now for the love and happiness you have given me. You will live to be a great lady, I shall be a great artist; but above your riches, and above my art, reaching beyond the grave, will remain our remembrance of each other. Give me one kiss, *comé ricordo.*"

With the hot tears raining down her face Maraquita looked up, but he was gone.

When Mrs. Ward reappeared, she inquired if the parting was over.

"Yes," said the girl, whose face was white as her white dress, "we have said good-bye."

Later that evening the servant brought in a bouquet of oleanders, Maraquita's favourite flower, as well as the promised introductions: "*da parte del Signor Giuseppe Lanni.*"

* * * * *

The long winter that followed gave place to a glorious spring. Never had Paris looked gayer or more brilliant than when the young bicyclists aforenamed arrived there, having "done" Italy entirely to their own satisfaction. All their reminiscences were founded on roads. "We could not bicycle there," or "What a run we got that day!" So they discussed the state of the road to Fiesole, too hilly for their machines they said, and the Appian Way, and the Street of the Tombs, with the keen appreciation of surveyors. Thus had they travelled through the land of poetry, leaving famine behind them at sundry cafés, and seeing Florence, Rome, and Naples with the rapidity born of this century of haste.

In the Champs Elysées just now a lively discussion was going on amongst them, as to the whereabouts of a certain picture then being exhibited, and which "*tout Paris*" was crowding to see. It was the work of a comparatively unknown artist, who by this one success had gained fame and fashion.

A royal duke had bought it for a very large sum, and as H.R.H.

was known as a good judge of art, his lead was being followed, and commissions poured in upon the fortunate painter.

The cyclists had heard all this at *table d'hôte;* and "Madame" at the Bureau of their hotel, had recommended them not to leave Paris without inspecting this *chef-d'œuvre;* so they had started, with a most imperfect understanding of Madame's directions, though during her voluble explanation they had chorused "*je comprends*" at intervals.

After much consolation and several fresh and false starts, they were fortunate enough to encounter an English groom who understood instantly what they wished to see. He proceeded to give directions, which followed, soon brought them to their goal, and they found themselves in a room containing only one picture. But what a picture! "Stunner!" faltered on the lips of the most audacious; and in the breathless silence of that crowded room, the homage of perfect stillness was paid to Giuseppe Lanni's masterpiece.

It represented a girl of extraordinary beauty standing in a balcony. Her white dress, and whiter face, shone out in the twilight; with one foot she crushed a bouquet of white oleanders, while in her hand she held a tiara of flashing diamonds; by her side in a casket of pale blue velvet lay other priceless jewels, giving colour to the otherwise white picture. On the dull gold of the frame was inscribed its name:

"*A Daughter of Earth.*"

II.

GO for money to St. Petersburg, for fashion to Paris, for pleasure to Rome, for celebrity to London! And so Giuseppe Lanni found—the favourable verdict of London had meant fortune to him.

Installed in a fine West-end studio, honorary member of the most artistic clubs, received as an honoured guest in the best society, popular and admired, nothing seemed wanting to the happiness of the young artist, who now realised to the full that "*Chi ha arte da per tutto ha parte;*" for everywhere he was welcome, while rich patrons smoothed away pecuniary anxieties, and made him feel the days too short for fulfilling his many commissions.

The studio was one of many studios under the same roof in a fashionable quarter—their separate rental represented the income of many a hard-worked curate—but Lanni had been well advised, he must keep himself *en évidence*, advertise himself in this sensational age. Amongst his many acquaintances, he had formed only one real friendship, a brother artist, named Morrison, whose studio was opposite his own. The big oak-doors faced each other and were divided only by a passage.

It was Morrison who sat with him on a lovely summer afternoon. The sun had managed to shine brightly, even through the London skylight, and Morrison had come in to bask in its rays, smoke with

his friend, and discuss a large party he had been present at the night before; for the season was at its height.

"It *was* hot, and no mistake," Morrison continued, "and the rooms were crammed. They had got a cannibal king on view, a queer-looking fellow, almost as lightly draped as the women, but not so well painted. He has an island in some unheard-of ocean; and while our Government annexes it and makes things generally comfortable, lest he should interfere while they are arranging his affairs, His Majesty is sent over with a missionary to see how England is worked. Here, he is positively beginning to prefer plovers' eggs and champagne to the repasts of his own kingdom. But, upon my word, it was ridiculous to see the smartest women in the room quite fetched by him; 'so interesting,' 'so fine-looking,' and mobbing his missionary for an introduction (*presentation* I should say) to a nigger! It made me quite sick——"

"You were jealous," interrupted Lanni, laughing.

"Jealous!" repeated Morrison, with withering contempt. Not I—though talking of jealousy some people do have luck, Lanni, the devil's own luck is the word. Last winter in Paris I met, copying in the Louvre—that Madonna of Botticelli's that you raved about, you know—well, a girl was copying it too. She was a pretty girl, I admit. Well, last night I met Aubusson—you know him, clever enough, but an infernal little gossip; so he began running over the Paris news—mentioned the hit your picture had made, by the way—then he said, *àpropos* of pictures, 'Do you recollect the girl copying the Botticelli? She has married St. Erne. I saw them go off after the ceremony from our Embassy by special to Cherbourg, where his yacht, the *Cymodoce*, awaited them.'"

"Who is St. Erne?" inquired Lanni, whose attention was divided between his easel and his companion.

"St. Erne! why, my dear fellow, St. Erne is a peer. St. Erne is a millionaire. St. Erne is also an idiot; but all the better for his sister's drawing-mistress, the girl who has married him, Maraquita Ward."

It is believed by some, that at our last supreme moment, our lives, or rather the principal events of our lives, will pass in review before us, as in a panorama. To Lanni that moment seemed to have come, for he saw, as in a vision, Maraquita with all her charms, the brightness of Southern beauty, embellished by the background of his own beautiful land, irradiated by happiness and his love, standing before him. No wonder that Morrison, startled by the deadly pallor of his friend's face, rushed for water, and when the housekeeper, who presided over the cleanliness of the studios, and the respectability of "her gentlemen," appeared at his summons, she too, frightened, exclaimed:

"Oh, sir! why, Mr. Lannay, you look like a ghost. Oh, sir, what is it?"

With a strong effort Lanni replied, "It is my heart I think. Sometimes I feel like this when I stand too long painting in the heat.

Thank you, Morrison; thank you, Mrs. Smith; I will lie down now, I shall soon be better."

* * * * * *

The London season has come to an end, and Lanni is starting, not for a holiday, but for another school to work in, and this time not alone, for Morrison accompanies him; and they have chosen Brittany with its rocky coast, its Celtic monuments, and its picturesque people for their out-of-door studio. They have reached Douarnenez now, and are sketching the sea in all its varied moods. Lanni is preparing a pendant to his first success, another commission from his royal patron, and is full of anxiety lest this second essay should not equal the first.

One evening, as they were returning from the shore of the bay, Morrison stopped suddenly and pointed to a girl kneeling before a large, rough image of the Virgin and Child. The girl's white dress suggested her first communion, and in her hand was the offering: a bunch of wild flowers.

It was a striking scene, the sun's last rays fell on the partly-bowed head, the sea behind a leaden grey, the sky purple with a coming storm.

Seizing the idea at once, Lanni sketched in the outlines, remarking in a tired voice: "The air is heavy with this tempest, and I am so wearied to-night; all the same, your idea is first-rate, Morrison, and I can see how this can be utilised for the Duke's commission admirably."

And so impressed was Lanni that he worked all evening till Morrison lost patience, and said he deserved to spoil the whole thing—" working at it in all those different lights, by Jove!" the more vexed that he was struck by the paleness of Lanni, and the look of overwrought excitement as he finally threw himself on his little iron-bedstead, still contemplating the easel where reposed the unfinished sketch.

That night there raged a storm so fearful, so dire in its effects, that to this day the pious Bretons cross themselves when they recall it. The thunder pealed, the lightning flashed as if all the batteries of earth were discharging in the firmanent of heaven. At intervals the rain poured like a rushing cascade down the steep pavements of the little town.

According to Lanni, sleep was impossible, and he remained wide awake all night; but Morrison persists in maintaining that in an overwrought state of mind he dreamed what follows, and that somnambulism explains what is otherwise inexplicable.

Lanni says that suddenly the storm ceased, and that the silence that followed could be felt. The moon shone through the clouds, with so bright a light, that he plainly distinguished a figure standing near his easel, while a slight noise made him aware of something gliding over the surface of his canvas. Without the slightest touch of the

supernatural, gazing at the picture the figure stood for several minutes, and then turned towards Lanni. In that look he recognised at once the face of all others he never forgot, that of Maraquita. With a gentle sigh she turned towards him, and he was conscious of a touch on his hand like the brush of a butterfly's wing.

After that he remembers nothing till he was awakened by his friend's loud stirring tones, as Morrison tried to rouse him.

"Why, Lanni, how you have slept! past ten o'clock. Come along, old fellow," he added in a subdued tone; "and when you have had breakfast we'll go and have a look at the sea; there's been a wreck of some English yacht, and I fear every soul on board has perished."

No need to say more; Lanni realised it all, even before they had mingled with the crowd gazing seawards, where, holding in his hand a broken spar just washed up by the surf, stood a Breton sailor, spelling out the word *Cymodoce*.

"C'est bien là le yacht du Milor Anglais," he remarked; "l'on voit que l'argent n'y fait rien, et que malgré les richesses l'on meurt de la même façon;" while an old woman exclaimed: "Eh, ma foi! en les voyant se promener ici au port Lundi, je me disais bien, Milor n'est pas beau, mais Miladi est crânement gentille."

Lanni turned to Morrison, and said hoarsely, "We'll go back." And in silence they returned to their lodgings and entered the room where Lanni had slept. Approaching the easel Morrison cried out in surprise:

"Why, old fellow, have you been painting all night? When did you fill in that face and those flowers?"

Lanni, who was looking out of the window, turned round and stood near his friend. The girl still knelt at the shrine, but the outstretched hand held now a bouquet of white oleanders, and transfigured as the face of an angel, with a hitherto undreamed-of sweetness, shone the well-known countenance of Maraquita.

* * * * *

Lanni's fame is world-wide; he has left England, and lives now in his own country, where the rushing little stream still makes music amidst the silver green olive trees and chestnut groves, and where he is surrounded by *Contadini* who live again in the pictures he loves to paint.

Morrison often visits him, and he alone is permitted to unveil a hidden picture, before which a heavy silk curtain is always drawn. Morrison says it is the finest production of the great painter, and that the world is poorer for not gazing on the rare beauty of—

"*A Daughter of Heaven.*"

THE LOST IDEAL.

I.

MIRANDA was a charming little girl of seventeen; she was also a bundle of contradictions—cultured and crude, clever and foolish, sentimental and very much alive to the ridiculous. She was also extremely pretty, in the Irish way, which is perhaps the prettiest way in the world. Her father, the Rector, was Irish, and he and all his family were genial, cheery folk, who laughed and grew fat. Miranda was rather ashamed of her own keen sense of fun, which belonged, she supposed, to her "lower nature." She liked to pose to herself as Earnest, with lofty ideals of life, love, and the dignity of womanhood.

Indeed, an ideal Ferdinand (she always thought of him as "Ferdinand") already haunted her maiden meditations—an adorable being, undreamed of in maturer philosophy; a splendid guest, to whom the doors of her heart were to fly open; a Ferdinand who seemed, alas! very unlikely to be cast on the shores of her conventional and dreadfully comfortable little existence.

One September day the beaming Rector, whose beams had never been obscured except when his only child's mother died, ten years before, called to Miranda from his study window.

"Chick!" cried he. He often called her "Chick," and she did not mind much, although the dignity of womanhood might be a little hurt.

Miranda, who was walking in the garden with a rough-edged, parchment-bound poet, stopped and looked up.

"Chick, would you like to come to London with me for a week?"

"Yes, papa," said she, in a little languid voice, and with a dreamy gaze beyond him into infinity.

She had very nearly jumped for joy, but recollected the dignity of womanhood in time, and waited until she got into her own room. Then she did.

They went to the house of her father's sister in London. She was a rich and lively old maid, then gaily curing a back-ache at some German baths, and spending most of her time with much cheerfulness up to her chin in them.

The happy old parson, who did not often give himself a holiday, enjoyed it thoroughly, and so did Miranda. He took his chick to all the amusing things that were to be had in September, and that were respectable. Among others to a clever burlesque, where Miranda entirely forget culture, dignity, and ideals, and sixty and seventeen laughed together till they cried.

One morning the Rector had to go into the City on business, and

left Miranda all alone. She meant to recline in an easy-chair and read Browning; but she got rather strained over "Sordello," which many who can run cannot read.

Now Miranda, reclining in her easy-chair, found it so much easier than Browning that she fell asleep.

She was shocked at herself when she awoke and found the poet prone at her feet. However, she got up, stretched her arms, and thought she would explore the three drawing-rooms in search of new toys and curiosities, of which her aunt was a great collector.

She came to the smallest room at the end; and even as she crossed the threshold, her eyes fell on—a face! She stopped short, then went forward with clasped hands and stood to gaze. It was only the photograph of a very handsome young man, stuck into the last leaf of a photograph screen standing on a little table; but in that moment Miranda thought she foretasted the rapture of a realised ideal. In those dark eyes she seemed to read genius and sweetness; in that counterfeit presentment she seemed to recognise the Ferdinand of her dreams.

Almost shyly she slipped the fateful carte out of the little screen, without even a glance at its companions there. The image had no superscription; the upper and lower edges of the mount had been pared away to admit of its insertion in the screen. This only added the fitting touch of mystery.

Miranda could not bring herself to replace and resign what seemed almost sacredly her own, almost heaven-sent. She put the heaven-sent Ferdinand into her pocket; and when the Rector and his daughter went home to the Rectory, Ferdinand went too.

Thereafter Miranda spent much time in contemplation of that sun-pictured face. In point of fact it was a badly-executed photograph, for there was a maziness in some of the outlines, a want of finish in some of the details. This, however, enhanced its significance in Miranda's eyes, and appeared to her to imply a peculiar value in the portrait as a portrait, independent of its merits as a work of art.

Perhaps (she sometimes fondly conjectured) the original was some young poet, hiding himself from fame, holding himself aloof with proud fastidiousness, far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife. The portrait had probably been obtained by stealth by some worshipping amateur photographer.

Miranda passed the winter in trembling expectation, half hoping, half dreading that her aunt would, in some of her letters, allude to the missing treasure, and at the same time tear the veil from its mystery; but no such enlightenment came, and in May Miranda was to go and stay in London with her father's sister.

Meanwhile, only two things happened to her at the Rectory. One was her eighteenth birthday, the other an offer of marriage from her father's curate, which it need scarcely be said that she refused, affianced as she felt herself to her ideal.

The curate was a good young man—handsome, too, with good brains, good heart, and good expectations. He was devoted to Miranda, and his sober fancy had never pictured anything so fair and sweet as this reality. She liked him very much indeed, appreciated his pleasant talk, his pleasant ways; but it was quite impossible to idealise him.

The poor young ecclesiastic was very unhappy when she refused him. He never smiled again for at least a week. Then he pulled himself together, went about his business manfully, and, being fond of a certain old versicle, hummed it to himself as he went:—

"Quit, quit for shame! this will not move,
This cannot take her;
If of herself she will not love,
Nothing will make her"—
* * * *

Need I say that this excellent young clergyman never hummed the last line of that old versicle, which I also carefully suppress?

II.

In May Miranda (and Ferdinand) went to London, where the pretty country girl was a good deal admired and enjoyed herself very much. Indeed, she was pronounced bewitching; there was no monotony about her, and there was a touch of innocent coquetry. Truth to say, Ferdinand faded a little from her thoughts at this time, as photographs are apt to fade. Still, no gilded youth had pushed him from his place.

Soon after she reached her aunt's house, Miranda had gone into that third room; but everything there was differently arranged, and the photograph screen had disappeared. She dared ask no questions about it.

One day at breakfast her aunt read a letter that seemed to give her considerable pleasure.

"Me dear," said she, "Charlie's coming."

"Who is Charlie?" asked Miranda, who had never heard of him before.

"Me dear," replied her aunt rather solemnly, "Charlie is the son of me first and only love; the man I should probably have married if he hadn't preferred some one else."

"Oh, poor auntie!" said Miranda, with ready sympathy.

"Not at all, me dear! I should have been poor if I'd married him, for he would have spent all me money. He married a richer woman, and spent all hers."

"And is he alive now?"

"No, me dear—both dead long ago. He got himself killed by a tiger out in India, and it killed her too. Not the tiger, but the loss

of her husband. Indeed then, she was far fonder of him than I ever was. Some well-off uncle looked after their boy, and got him into the F.O. He's been in Canada these three years, and now he writes me word he's coming home, and will be in London next week. So sit ye down, Miranda child, and send him a card for me dance next Thursday."

Miranda did as she was bidden in a little flutter of agitation. An exquisite possibility had occurred to her. Could this be the original? Could Charlie be Ferdinand?

"Is—is he nice, auntie?" she asked tremulously.

"Well, me dear, you'll soon see for yourself. Oh, yes! Charlie's nice enough, but not so nice or so handsome as his poor father, me first and only love. However, that's ancient history now; and there's no doubt I should have been a tried woman. Goodness knows I never grudged him to his wife, and maybe if I'd married him I mightn't have grudged him to the tiger quite as much as she did."

Thursday came; the guests came—more than could ever get upstairs. Charlie arrived early and did get upstairs. His hostess, glorious in green velvet and diamonds, pounced on him, took both his hands, and kissed him before the assembled multitude.

Presently Miranda made her appearance, and, being effusively introduced to each other, they went off to the ballroom together. Miranda's heart beat a little faster when they met; for one moment she had seemed to recognise the beautiful dark eyes of Ferdinand. But ah, no, no! That round foolish face inclined to be chubby, that nose inclined to be snubby, that wide mouth for ever widened by a schoolboy grin! Hyperion to a satyr! And as for those eyes, there was no speculation in them, and it would have been difficult indeed to find genius and greatness in their shadows, thought Miranda, as Charlie prattled inanely at her side.

Miranda went to bed that night vaguely disappointed and unhappy, and had a painful dream of a distorted Ferdinand photographed on a spoon. Charlie came to luncheon next day. Miranda was tired and a little cross; she found him horribly uninteresting. Nice? How could auntie say he was nice? He had not two ideas; he chattered like an ape and was quite as ugly; his eyes were not the least like Ferdinand's. He was an impostor; he bored her; she wished he would go. He and her aunt had all the talk to themselves; Miranda sat by silent and glum, and said she had a headache. She was only half conscious that Charlie was babbling and bragging of his exploits on the ice in Canada; she only half heard what he said when he asked her aunt if she had ever got the photos he sent her a year before.

"Nine of our skating club and the—what do you call it?—you know——"

"Oh, yes," said her aunt; "I got them, and put them all into a photograph screen. It used to stand on a table in the third room

up-stairs. I dare say it's somewhere up there now. Let us go and look for it."

"Photograph screen!" The words woke up Miranda like a pistol-shot. At last—at last! And what was going to happen? Was her sin to find her out? No, she would never confess; but she felt very guilty, and shook in her shoes. However, she managed to walk up-stairs in them behind her aunt, with Charlie at her heels.

In the third room her aunt pulled open the drawer of a cabinet. "Here it is?" said she, "folded up as flat as a pancake"—and she gave it to Charlie, who unfolded it.

"Yes," cried he, with his wide laugh, "here we all are! But, I say, where's the—the—combination—composite—what d'you call it? Nine of us blended into one, you know—the new dodge. What's become of it? Awfully handsome fellow we made, too. Bit of Brown, bit of Jones, bit of me. By Jove! What's the matter? Are you ill? Here, sit down. Where's the eau-de-Cologne?"

Miranda sat down. She did feel a little faint for an instant while she realised the fatal truth, and Ferdinand melted into space; but then the suppressed fun in her "lower nature" jumped up like a Jack-in-the box on the phantom heels of the vanishing Ferdinand, and she went off into peals on peals of inextinguishable laughter. They were rather frightened; her aunt slapped her hands, Charlie emptied a bottle of eau-de-Cologne over her, and I am afraid she slapped *him*.

"Me poor child," said her aunt, "she's hysterical!"

"I'm nothing of the sort," gasped Miranda, trying to stop laughing, going off again, and speaking in spasms. "Oh, oh, oh! it's too, too, too funny! Oh, oh, oh! that I—should fall in love—with nine men—at once! No, no, no! with nine—bits of men! Oh, oh, oh! a thing—of shreds and—patches! Oh, oh, oh, oh! shall I ever, ever, ever stop laughing?"

* * * * *

Miranda went home in July, a merrier and a wiser girl. In October she married her faithful curate, whose only rival had been Ferdinand.

"LET ME PRESENT YOU," SAID MRS. CRESWICK; AND THE CEREMONY WAS PERFORMED.

THE ARGOSY.

FEBRUARY, 1893.

THE ENGAGEMENT OF SUSAN CHASE.

By Mrs. Henry Wood, author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER III.

A CONSULTATION.

IT was one of the first days of early spring. Two young ladies stepped from their house into the garden, to see what opening flowers, what budding trees, had weathered the biting winds and frosts. They were Susan and Ursula Chase. One of them was tall and stout, and she looked about her with interest, for she loved the garden: that was Ursula; the other, a fair, quiet girl, with a subdued look of care on her face, walked more abstractedly, as if she were occupied with inward thought: this was Susan.

Ursula talked eagerly, as they slowly strolled along: the brilliant sunshine had put her into spirits. Her sister replied in monosyllables.

"How quiet and dull you are, Susan!" she exclaimed at length. "What is the matter?"

"Nothing," answered Susan.

"I know what it is. You are thinking of that complaining letter of Mrs. Carnagie's. You never will overcome that habit of yours, Susan, of taking little disagreeables to heart. Mrs. Carnagie writes as if she were not happy. Well, she could not expect to be happy. But that is no reason why you should sigh and look sad, and walk through this welcome sunshine as if you did not care for it, or for the promising aspect of the shrubs and flowers."

They were passing a garden-seat as Ursula spoke, and Susan sat down upon it, and touched her sister's arm to detain her.

"I will tell you what is troubling me, Ursula; why I cannot enjoy this spring day, or anything else just now. I have been thinking, ever since that letter arrived from Emma——"

"From Mrs. Carnagie. Well?"

"That one of us ought to go out to her."

"Ought to do WHAT?" echoed Ursula, in tones of anger and astonishment.

"To go out, and be with her in her approaching illness."

"Susan, I am amazed at you—I am shocked at you!" uttered Ursula. "Have you forgotten her conduct—how wickedly she behaved to us—to you?"

"But"—Susan answered in a low voice—"you remember Who it is has charged us that if our brother sin against us we shall forgive him; not once, but seventy times seven."

"We are not charged to give in to Mrs. Carnagie's fanciful caprices," peremptorily spoke Ursula, drowning her sister's voice. "That cannot have anything to do with religion."

"Oh yes, it has, Ursula. Since her letter reached us, I have been considering it in all lights, and I feel that one of us ought to go out to her."

"You have singular notions!" exclaimed Ursula.

"When the thought first flashed upon me, I drove it away, it may be angrily; I *would not* dwell upon it. But it seems determined not to be driven away; and it keeps whispering to me that it is what must be done, if we would fulfil our duty."

"Would it be pleasant to you, may I ask, to go and visit Charles Carnagie?"

"No. Very unpleasant."

"And *I* am not going. So the thing is impossible, and need not be spoken of again."

"Could you not be induced to go?" asked Susan.

"Never. Had things gone on as they ought, and you were there in her place, I could not have gone out to you, Susan dear, for a hot climate would kill me. Look how ill I am in the heat of summer, even here. No. I will not sacrifice my health for Mrs. Carnagie. She is not worth it."

"She is our sister, Ursula."

"Do not let us prolong a useless discussion, Susan. Nothing in the world should induce me to go out, so let the matter rest. Were I to see Mrs. Carnagie, here or there, it would only be to reproach her. Shall we proceed?"

Susan waved away the proposal, and remained seated.

"We must settle this matter, Ursula, but not by letting it rest. I felt sure you would not go; therefore," she added in a lower tone, "I have been making up my own mind to the inevitable."

"Not to go out to Barbadoes!"

"Yes, I have. If we let her remain to go through her illness alone, and she should die in it, as she says she fears she may, we should never cease to reproach ourselves. I never should."

"She is not going to die under it," retorted Ursula. "She was always full of fancies."

"I hope she is not. But you see by her letter, how low-spirited she is; how she dreads it."

"Her conscience pricks her," said Ursula. "One with a bad conscience is afraid of everything."

"Dear Ursula, you will so much oblige me by never alluding in that way to the past. It is over and gone, and ought to be buried in oblivion. Surely if I have forgotten it, you may do so."

"You have not forgotten it, Susan."

"Quite as much as is needful and necessary. Of course, to entirely forget it, as a thing that never took place, is an impossibility, but I have forgiven them both, in my own heart."

"And retain no tender remembrance of him? I don't believe you, Susan. You are not one to forget so easily."

"Yes, I am, when there is a necessity," Susan almost sternly said. "I could have been true to him for my whole life, though he must have passed it abroad, and I here, as those few years were passed; but from the very moment I knew he did not care for me, I set to work to root him from my heart; and I have well succeeded. How could you think it was otherwise, Ursula?—and he the husband of Emma!"

"Nay, don't be put out. I did not think you were cherishing the old love—of course not; but I thought there would be sufficient of its remembrance left to prevent your running out to see them in the first year of their marriage."

Susan felt the words. Ursula was of a stern, unforgiving nature, and her remarks were often cutting.

"I am not running out to see them for my own pleasure; it will be anything but pleasant to me, although he is to me, now, no more than my sister's husband. I would rather traverse the whole wide earth, than go to Barbadoes; but a sense of duty impels me."

"You always did think so much about 'duty,'" peevishly remarked Ursula. "Your conscientiousness must be very strongly marked."

"I suppose it is—I believe it is. And there is another thing which urges me to go," added Susan; "my love for Emma. Although she acted as she did, I cannot forget how fond I was of her; and since the arrival of this letter, when I have thought of her as ill, anxious, lonely, not (as it seems) too happy, all my old love for her has come back to me."

"You would go sailing out, and make yourself a slave to the humours of Mrs. Carnagie, and remain there as nursemaid to her children!" cried the vexed Ursula. "In twenty years from this, we should not see you home again."

"Not so," answered Susan. "When once Emma is safely over her illness, I shall come back to you. I shall certainly not remain to make my home there, in *their* house. But she does seem so anxious for what she calls my forgiveness, and so apprehensive that she shall not live! I must go, Ursula."

"How could you go? Who is to take you?"

"I can go alone. Under the charge of the captain of the ship. I have thought out my plans."

"Oh! if you have made up your mind, there's nothing more to be said, for it would not turn you," resentfully spoke Ursula. "Shall you start to-day?" she ironically added.

"No," smiled Susan, "but I should like to be away by this day fortnight—should a vessel be sailing about that time. My own preparations will not take long."

"Susan, you are not in earnest!"

"Now that I have made up my mind, the sooner I am away the better. I must be there before Emma's illness."

"That's not going to happen in a week."

"Neither can I reach Barbadoes in a week. I wish you could see this in the light that I do, Ursula; you would not grumble at me then."

It was the loving spirit of charity, of forgiveness, that was urging Susan Chase to take this long journey to visit her sister. A season of bitter desolation had passed over Susan, during which her heart had been purified to wiser and better things than the daily gratification of self. Ursula had not yet found this spirit; her time for it was not come; she was proud and unforgiving. Never, since her sister's marriage, had she called her by her familiar Christian name; always "Mrs. Carnagie;" and yet Emma had not sinned against her, but against Susan, for she had wiled away the intended husband to whom Susan had been engaged for years. When Susan saw that they loved each other—or thought they did—and that Mr. Carnagie had forgotten her in his new passion for her young and handsome sister, she sacrificed her prospects and her love to them, gave Mr. Carnagie his release, and suffered them to marry. To visit them in —as Ursula expressed it—the first year of their marriage, could not be pleasant to her; but Emma had written home a long and most heart-rending letter, every page of which implied a wish, though it was not expressed, that Susan was with her to comfort and forgive her, and to take care of her in an approaching time of peril. Susan asked herself how she could refuse to go—she who had promised their mother, on her death-bed, always to cherish Emma.

When her resolution became known, the neighbourhood troubled itself amazingly about it, neighbourhood fashion. It chiefly adopted the views of Ursula. But Susan was not to be dismayed, and with as little delay as possible, she started on her voyage.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PINES.

The house occupied by Lieutenant and Mrs. Carnagie was called the Pines, and was situated near the capital of Barbadoes, where Mr. Carnagie's regiment was quartered. A small house for a West-Indian

country house, but it was very pretty, of gay, cheerful appearance, with a cool verandah running along the front and the west side, whence a few steps descended to the garden—a well-kept garden, full of trees, flowers, and tropical fruits. Marriage—frantic as they were for it—had not brought to Mr. and Mrs. Carnagie the happiness they had possibly anticipated. It may be that some fault lay on both sides; it is generally so, where dissensions take place in early-married days. Mrs. Carnagie was exacting and warm in temper, and the lieutenant was more careless to please her than he might have been.

She was sitting one evening in a sullen mood, full of anger at her husband, for he ought to have been home to dinner, but had not come, and she had taken it alone. The sudden darkness succeeding to the garish day, with scarcely any twilight, and to which Mrs. Carnagie had grown accustomed, had scarcely overspread the room, when she heard her husband's horse canter up. She rose from her sofa, touched a hand-bell for lights, and prepared a loud reproach as she waited for him.

Mr. Carnagie, tall and dark as ever, entered listlessly, and, ere she could speak, laid a letter before her, with a remark that the packet was in.

"Why did you not come home to dinner?"

"Chard was out, and I had to take the afternoon duty," was Mr. Carnagie's reply.

Mrs. Carnagie did not know whether this was true. She felt inclined to tell him it was not. But to what use, since he would be sure to persist in the story. He had grown indifferent to coming home of late, and the excuse was always the same—duty. She generally broke out into reproaches; which were not quite the way to win back his allegiance.

"You might have sent me word that you did not intend to come home," she said; "not have kept me waiting an hour for dinner."

"That was your own fault. I have desired you never to wait. An officer's time is not his own."

"It is sufficiently his own when he chooses to make it so," significantly responded Mrs. Carnagie.

'Why do you not open your letter, Emma?"

"Oh, I suppose it is like the last!—one of Ursula's stiff epistles, calling me 'Mrs. Carnagie.' I wonder she writes at all!"

"This is from Susan."

"From Susan!" echoed Mrs. Carnagie, taking up the letter. "How do you know?"

"It is her handwriting."

"Yes! of course you remember *that!* I am positive those letters you keep, tied up in a bundle in your desk, and that you never will let me see the outside of, were from her. You love her remembrance far better than you love me now."

Mrs. Carnagie was very foolish. She did not really think this, and her husband knew she did not, but she was in a mood to get up reproaches from nothing.

"I have told you they were not from Susan," he angrily said. "I burnt Susan's letters the day after I brought you out here."

With a gesture of impatience, he went out on the verandah, and, stretching himself on one of the cool seats there, lighted his cigar. His wife opened the newly-arrived letter, and ran her eyes down it.

"Charles! Charles!" she exclaimed, her tone changing to one of joyful eagerness. "Charles, I have such news! Do come here."

"What is it?" he asked, re-entering.

"Who do you think is coming out?—to be with me in my illness. Who *do* you think?"

"Ursula?"

"No. Susan."

"Susan! Coming here!"

"Susan is coming here. Oh, how kind she is! She is on her passage out now."

"It is more than you—more than we both deserve," was his remark. "Are you sure it is Susan that is coming?"

"She gives her reasons; and says: 'Show this letter to Mr. Carnagie.' She thinks it her duty to come and take care of me in my unhappiness, not only because she loves me, but because she remembers her promises to my mother. Is she not good, Charles?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Carnagie; "she always was good."

"Charles, tell me the truth—why you did not come home to dinner."

"I have told you. Duty." And Mr. Carnagie walked out to his cigar again, and Emma frowned.

Mr. Carnagie sat, and smoked, and ruminated. Taking one consideration with another, he did not know that he was glad Susan Chase was coming out. For his wife's comfort in her approaching illness, he certainly was so; but he was conscious that his domestic home was very unlike the one Susan must have pictured to herself, years ago, which owned him for its lord and master—as he was now unlike what she had then thought him; and he did not altogether care that she should come behind the scenes and see this.

Not until the last week in April did Susan reach Barbadoes. The passage from England had been long, the ship having met with contrary winds. Amidst the confusion of the arrival, people coming off from the shore, and people leaving the vessel, Susan felt confused and anxious. She expected to see her sister or Mr. Carnagie, or both; but neither arrived to claim her.

"Suppose my letter should not have reached them!" she suddenly exclaimed to herself, and her cheeks burnt with crimson at the thought of appearing *there* without warning, and having to make verbal explana-

tions for doing so. At that very moment, an exceedingly good-looking English officer, who had just come on board, approached her.

"I think I must be right," he said, with a friendly smile, "that I have the honour of speaking to Miss Chase, for I see a great likeness to Mrs. Carnagie."

That was through poor Susan's momentary flush. "I am Miss Chase," she replied. "Are my sister and Mr. Carnagie not here?"

"Mrs. Carnagie is not well; and Mr. Carnagie requested me, last night, to come on board, if she arrived before he got back."

Susan found the gentleman speaking to her was a Captain Chard: but ere many more minutes had elapsed, Mr. Carnagie appeared. Susan's manner was calm and self-possessed: it would never be otherwise to Mr. Carnagie again. He hurried her on shore, and into the carriage; not giving time for any luggage whatever to accompany them, but ordering it to be sent on.

"How is Emma?" she inquired of Mr. Carnagie, as the carriage drove away, for really his movements had been so hasty, there was not time to put the question before.

"Thank you. She has a little boy."

"A little boy!" exclaimed Susan. "Since when?"

"Only to-day."

"Oh—I am sorry you should have left home to meet me. I could have found my way to you, I make no doubt. Is she well?"

"Yes; I believe so. Chard had sent me word that the ship was casting anchor, so I thought the best plan was to come and bring you at once to Emma."

When Susan arrived at the Pines, she had to wait before she could go into her sister's room, and Mr. Carnagie left her in one of the sitting-rooms. Susan was very hot: she was sure she should not like a West Indian climate, and she sat admiring the cool matting, and the cool, floating fans which kept up a constant breeze, when the door opened, and Ruth came in. The girl burst into tears when Susan shook her by the hand, so delighted was she to see a home face again. She had lived with them in England, and had accompanied Emma on her marriage.

"Ruth," asked Miss Chase, "was not this a rather sudden event? I hoped to have been here for it. I understood from my sister it was not expected until May."

"That is what we all thought, Miss Susan," was the girl's answer. "I think my mistress made herself ill."

"What do you mean, Ruth?"

"The night before last she was put out about something, and she quarrelled with Mr. Carnagie. Quite violent she was, and I believe that took effect upon her. She is a good deal altered from what she used to be, ma'am, and puts herself out over the least thing."

Mrs. Carnagie improved in health. At the end of a week Susan

laughingly asked her where her presentiment of non-recovery had flown to.

"It is all owing to your care and to your good nursing," answered Emma. "Oh, Susan! you are a great deal kinder to me than I deserve. Charles said so, the evening that your letter arrived. After our conduct——"

"We will bury the past *in* the past," interrupted Susan. "It is the only request I make you."

"Well—so be it. Yet let me just tell you one thing, Susan: that if I had foreseen all, you should have been the one to have him, if you would: but not I. If you knew how very different he is from what he appeared that month at our house——"

"Emma, I entreat you, let us find some other topic of discourse."

"You will not hear anything against him: I see what it is," cried the perverse invalid. "You think him an angel, and everything that's good; but he is just the contrary. You can't deny that you used to think him one, Susan; and of course you think so still."

Susan was pained. She did not like the charge, and yet scarcely liked to condescend to refute it. She began to think Emma more childish than ever, and suffered her to run on.

"I don't believe he cares for me at all; not half or a quarter as much as he used to care for you. I am thankful, for your sake, Susan dear, that you did not have him. He has grown indifferent to his home, stops out, and never cares to apologise; and one day—it was about last Christmas—he frightened me nearly out of my senses. I never saw any rational being in such a passion in my whole life: his fury was frightful. Did you know he could put himself into these fits of passion?"

"I never saw him in one," was Susan's somewhat evasive answer; for she remembered what Frances Maitland had once said to her.

"Well, he can; though I believe it takes a good deal to excite him to it. Never marry a passionate man, Susan."

"Do you never lose your temper, yourself, and fall into a passion?" asked Susan, in a half-joking manner.

"I? If I do lose my temper I have good cause," returned Mrs. Carnagie. "There are some things one cannot and ought not to put up with: even you, Susan, patient as you are, would not do so."

"Whatever they may be, ill-temper will not mend them," replied Susan. "A pleasant spirit, one with the other, would soothe the rubs and crosses of life, and render you both so much happier. Besides, as your little child grows up, what an example anger and discourtesy would be to set before him."

"You are not aware what lives some of these officers lead, out here, especially the single ones. They make what they call left-handed marriages. Hardly one but has done so."

"Left-handed marriages!" echoed Susan, puzzled. "Who with?"

"With the Creoles, chiefly. Some of these false wives are as white as we are, some darker, some black—fastidious tastes, they must have, certain of these officers! Charles was one of them."

"Oh, no!" involuntarily uttered Susan.

"Oh, no, you say! You think him better than others, do you! He is worse than others. All those years when you deemed him so constant, he was playing truant to you with that Creole wife. *Wife!* Now do you think I could bear that, and put up with it tamely? When I heard, after I came out, what had been going on, I felt inclined to run away from Charles, and never come back to him."

"But," cried Susan, her mind rebelling at being made the receptacle of such news, "if I understand you rightly, this happened years ago."

"What if it did? the traces remain. There are two little dark wretches, and his money going out to support them. And, for all I know, he still——"

"My dear sister," hastily interrupted Susan, "it seems to me that you are looking at things in a wrong light. You are his true wife, and therefore——"

"Are you going to defend him?—to defend such a system?" angrily cried Mrs. Carnagie.

"You know better. I think it very bad, though I do not wish to speak of it. But, all that had happened, *had* happened before you were anything to him, and you never ought to have suffered it to pass your lips in speaking with him. It was not your affair, or one you had any business with. Never speak of it again, Emma; banish it from your memory. He is your husband now, your lawful husband; be to him a kind and affectionate wife, and if he is not yet (though I should hope he is) quite all he ought to be, he will become so in time. It rests with you."

"You had a lucky escape, Susan," persisted Mrs. Carnagie. "Fancy what it was, almost as soon as I landed, to be told that he had been as good as married before! What would you have said, had such news greeted you?"

"I should have said—whatever I may have felt—that it was no friend to me who could impart such news. Who told you, Emma?"

"Major Jacobson's wife. Her husband is on half-pay, and holds some civil post out here. She has lived on the island for years, and knows the ins and outs of all the officers' affairs, however many may be quartered here. She spoke of it quite as a matter of course; as one might speak of changing a servant. Charles found, though, that I did not take it as a matter of course. We have never been cordial since."

"And is it this which has created the unhappiness, the dissension you speak of, between you and your husband?"

"That is the chief thing. That was the first and great cause; but

I have found out plenty of faults to reproach him with, since. Not perhaps of the same nature : I don't say that."

"You have looked out for faults, I fear," said Susan.

"To be sure I have. Things that I might never have thought of, or should have passed over lightly; but I felt my heart completely turn against him. I should not care if he died to-morrow."

'Oh, Emma!" cried Susan, in anguished tones, "how can I hope to bring you to your senses?—to a just view of your duty to your husband? Whatever had taken place in the past was at an end. I cannot think otherwise, and it was your duty and interest so to regard it. In visiting this upon Mr. Carnagie, in reproaches, in perverseness of temper, you, his wife, were laying a train of misery for your whole future life."

"Of course! Charles is right, and I am wrong. He did right then, and the other officers do right, and Miss Chase has turned champion for them! I wish I had never written you how unhappy I was! I might have known, if you came out, it would not be to sympathise with my wrongs, but to defend Lieutenant Carnagie. Let my pillow alone, Susan; it does not want fidgeting with."

The tears filled Susan's eyes, and she almost wished, then, that she had listened to Ursula, and left Mr. and Mrs. Carnagie to themselves. How should she succeed in bringing her sister into a better frame of mind and temper? Could she ever succeed?

If she did it would be a miracle. Any one but Susan, so persevering and patient, would have deemed the task a hopeless one. Emma Chase by nature was obstinate, self-willed, fractious, and inordinately vain; but *as* Emma Chase, shielded in her own home, guided by wise friends, little scope had been afforded for their display. She had been indulged and petted, her vanity was fostered, and her whims were given way to, and even Susan had not known how very little good there was in her. But as Mrs. Carnagie, all the ill, and worse than all, was displayed.

The little child died. Mr. Carnagie evidently mourned it deeply; and Emma, for a whole week, went into incessant bursts of tears. Had they been wise, had Emma been alive to her own true interest, they might have been reconciled to each other then, have buried grievances, and laid the foundation for a happy and peaceful life. Somehow it was not done; and Susan was afraid almost to breathe to herself her conviction that the fault was Emma's, lest she might be accused of partiality for Mr. Carnagie.

CHAPTER V.

AT CROSS PURPOSES.

Autumn came, and Susan Chase was still at Barbadoes. She had not dared to leave Emma, for a new fear for her had begun to spring up

—her extreme gaiety of conduct. It is true there was not much scope for joining in worldly amusement where they were situated, but however little or much might be going on, Mrs. Carnagie was certain to be in it. And, what was most especially distasteful to Susan, she was invariably surrounded by officers, laughing with them, and listening to their reckless nonsense. Riding in the cool of the morning, surrounded by redcoats at luncheon, lounging in the afternoon bazaar at Bridgetown, dressed-out at parties in the evening; in any and all of these might be seen Mrs. Carnagie, flirting with all who would flirt with her. Her husband remonstrated, not against the flirting; he would not, in his pride, put it upon that score, but against the expense. His income was good, but not extravagant, and Mrs. Carnagie was falling into extravagant habits. The luncheons she would cause to be set out, and the evening entertainments she would give were profusely expensive. Mr. Carnagie might as well have remonstrated to the moon, for she paid not the least attention to him. Susan was miserable, and Emma laughed at her.

One day Mr. Carnagie came in, looking jaded and tired. It was the hour for dinner, but Mrs. Carnagie was off on some expedition, and did not seem to be remembering it. Susan was sitting with her work in the verandah, and he came and stood by her. They had lapsed, from the first, quite into their relative positions of brother and sister-in-law, and former days had never been alluded to between them; not a trace or recollection of what had been, seemed to be retained by either.

"Where's Emma?" asked Mr. Carnagie.

"She went out after luncheon. I thought she had probably gone to the town, and that you would come back with her. She may have gone across to Mrs. Jacobson's and have stayed there, gossiping."

Mr. Carnagie began to whistle. Presently he spoke again, and looked impatiently at his watch.

"I want my dinner. It is ten minutes past the hour."

"I hope she will not be long," was all the comfort poor Susan could give.

"I think I shall take to dining out there," he continued, nodding his head in the direction of the town.

"At the mess?" remarked Susan, wishing her sister would come in.

"At any rate, on busy days. Chard has got leave for home at last, and sails by the next packet—which will be here in a day or so. I shall have more to do when he is gone."

"I knew he had obtained it," answered Susan.

"Yes, I imagine you did," said Mr. Carnagie. "And that you are the moving motive," he added, looking at her with a meaning smile. "I joked Chard about it to-day, coming off parade, and he turned as red as his coat; I thought the scarlet would never go down. Those fair men do show their blushes, if they have got any."

Susan did not understand.

"What did you joke him about?" she inquired.

"Now, Susan! how prettily innocent you appear. There is no occasion to make a mystery of it to me, for I know about it from Emma."

"About what, Mr. Carnagie? I am making no mystery."

"Why—if you will have me say it—you know Chard has got leave for home, you acknowledge that."

"Yes, I know that."

"And you know, I presume, that he has been pretty constant in his attendance here?"

"Yes," faltered Susan, not quite so readily as at the other question. Mr. Carnagie smiled.

"For once that any other officer has come here," he continued, "and some of them have not been slack in their attentions, Chard has come ten times. He would not do this without a powerful motive."

Susan said nothing. What *was* Mr. Carnagie driving at?

"And as he has made it all right with a certain young lady, I expect she will be going by the next packet, and come back with him as Mrs. Chard. You see I am *au courant*, Susan."

Susan stared at Mr. Carnagie, and ran over in her mind the few available young ladies of all who visited at the Pines. She could fix on none.

"What young lady is it?" she resumed.

"Oh, Susan! to pretend ignorance, and ask me that! You used to be superior to coquetry. But possibly you think *I* have forfeited all right to be the depository of your love secrets?"

It was the first time he had ever alluded in any way to the past, and Susan felt her face flush a little. Therefore, when she spoke, it was with cold, pointed calmness.

"I really am ignorant to what you are alluding, Mr. Carnagie; if I were not, I would not pretend to be so. I have not heard that Captain Chard was likely to marry."

He rose up in astonishment, and stood before her. "Susan!"

"What? What do you mean?"

"It is you that Chard is going to marry! Nobody else!"

"Me!" uttered Susan. "Who could have told you that?"

"Emma, herself. I asked her, one day, what on earth brought Chard dancing up here everlastingly, and she said it was after you. That things were settled, or on the point of being settled, between you."

Susan Chase gathered in the meaning of the words; she gathered in the full meaning of other words—and actions—that had loomed unpleasingly upon her for some time past; and she turned sick with a defined fear, and her face and lips grew as white as the work she was engaged on.

"I see I have startled you, Susan," said Mr. Carnagie. "I did not mean to hurt or vex you, and if you object to my knowing it, I am sorry Emma should have told me."

Susan opened her lips to assure Mr. Carnagie that Captain Chard was not, and never had been, anything to her; but stern thoughts came sternly over her, and she stopped herself in time. At that moment her sister's carriage appeared in sight, and she raised her hand to point it out to Mr. Carnagie.

"Yes! I wonder where she has been. Now we can have dinner. Touch the hand-bell, will you, Susan, and tell them to be quick in serving it. Susan, I am sorry I vexed you."

"Thank you, Mr. Carnagie, you did not vex me. I was only—only very much surprised," was Susan's answer.

Mr. Carnagie leisurely descended the steps, to be in readiness to help his wife from the carriage, and Susan pressed her forehead upon the railing of the verandah, her head aching and her heart sick.

Why should Mrs. Carnagie have told her husband that Captain Chard's attraction there was herself? It was a barefaced untruth. Captain Chard had not paid her any attention whatever. Excepting—it came now into her brain like a flash of light, and the indignant crimson came to her brow with it—excepting when Mr. Carnagie had been at home. Then he had been attentive to her, but Susan, in her indifference to Captain Chard, had not taken notice of it. A frightful suspicion of what Emma's motive might have been—of what it must have been—came searing her heart, and Susan Chase wrung her hands in despair and tribulation.

"I am sorry I kept you waiting," Mrs. Carnagie had the grace to say. "I called in at the Lettsoms', and they kept me."

"At the Lettsoms'!" repeated Mr. Carnagie. "Have you been into the town?"

"All the afternoon, at one place or another. Susan, you look tired."

"It's odd I should not have seen the carriage. I wish I had seen it, I should have been glad to come home in it, instead of riding, for my head aches frightfully, and the sun did it no good. Have you any one coming here to-night?"

"No, unless Captain Chard should drop in. He said perhaps he might do so. I met him."

"Because I shall go to bed," said Mr. Carnagie.

"What is that for?" asked his wife.

"If my head is to split, as it is splitting now, I can't sit up. It is as if I were going to have the fever."

Susan raised her eyes. Mr. Carnagie did look ill, his face hot, and his eyelids heavy. And though he had complained of wanting his dinner, she saw he was playing with it more than eating it.

"How does the fever come?" she inquired.

"We have more sorts of fever than one, Susan," he answered.

"Sometimes the fellow will be hanging about you for a fortnight, and you are languid and miserable, and cannot tell what's the matter with you until it breaks out. But the worst fever comes on without warning almost like a sunstroke, and it often does its work."

"Kills you, do you mean?" returned Susan.

Mr. Carnagie nodded, laid down his knife and fork, and when the cloth was removed, he rose and said he should go at once to bed. Mrs. Carnagie followed him upstairs, though whether she went to his room with him Susan did not know. Captain Chard came in later, and he was the only visitor they had that night.

"What is the matter with Carnagie?" he inquired.

"Only a headache," said Mrs. Carnagie, "it was through riding about in the sun. He began talking to Susan about fever, frightening her, I think."

"No," interposed Susan quietly, "he did not frighten me. I think he looked ill."

Between nine and ten, Susan went upstairs for some lace she wanted for her work, leaving her sister and Captain Chard playing cribbage. When she returned, both had left the room. She looked in the other sitting-room, which was also lighted up, but they were not there.

Susan stepped on to the verandah, to the dark corner of it, and stood there, leaning over the front railings, and looking out. She thought she felt a dampness in the air, and knew it was not well to stand in it, but her heart was too busy with anxious thoughts to be over-cautious that night. It was bright moonlight, and presently her eye caught what she thought was the white dress of her sister in one of the side-walks. Yes it was; she and Captain Chard were walking arm-in-arm; now stopping as if to talk, and now slowly pacing on; only occasionally could Susan see them, as they moved amidst the trees.

Her heart beat violently; what ought she to do? Setting aside all the fears which had come to her that evening, she felt that it was not seemly for Mrs. Carnagie to be wandering about by moonlight with a young officer—that she herself could not do it, were she a wife. Suppose she went and called to her, how would it look? what would Captain Chard think of her interference? At least twenty minutes did she stop there deliberating, and then she descended the steps, and sped along the broad drive, calling to her sister when she came to the side-walk. They both advanced towards her.

"Emma, I wished to remind you how damp it is. Do you not feel it? I am sure you ought not to walk in it to-night."

"Oh, it's nothing," was Mrs. Carnagie's reply; "you should feel some of our nights here."

"I think you had better come in."

"Yes, I will follow you directly."

Susan could not well linger after this, and she returned in-doors,

with a heavy step and a heavier heart. A yawning gulf seemed stretched out before her, waiting for somebody's feet to fall into it. She wished it was her own—if that might save her sister. After Captain Chard's return from his leave of absence, she, Susan, would not be here; Emma would then be alone. If she renewed this absurd intimacy with him, what might not be the result? Mrs. Carnagie soon came running in. Captain Chard had gone.

"Emma——" Susan stopped. She sat down on an ottoman, and almost gasped for breath; twenty sentences rose to her lips, and none seemed appropriate. "Emma, you are too much with Captain Chard," she uttered at length.

Mrs. Carnagie took the words with great coolness. "Has Mr. Carnagie been helping you to that opinion?"

"For shame, Emma! No. But you have been wilfully blinding him. You have told him that Captain Chard's object in coming here so much was to see me."

"Did he tell you that?"

"Yes—believing it. I did not undeceive him then; I thought I must speak to you first. Emma, if you do not alter your plan of conduct, you will be lost."

"Thank you for warning me," replied Mrs. Carnagie, with a mocking smile.

"Oh, Emma!" cried Susan, imploringly raising her hands, "have you forgotten that you are your mother's daughter—our sister—the wife of Charles Carnagie? You *must* alter. You cannot intend to —to disgrace her memory, to bring shame upon us, and him!"

"Why, Susan, what has taken you to-night? I should think you have caught the fever we spoke of. Who says I am going to disgrace you?"

"You will inevitably lose your good name if you go on as you have latterly been doing, lapsing into familiarity with other men, and deceiving your husband; you will deserve to lose it. Halt on your course whilst you are safe, and whilst you hold your husband's good opinion, and the world's favour. Emma! if you would but turn to Mr. Carnagie with affection, he would turn to you."

"I will not turn to him," she passionately interrupted; "for the love I once bore him has changed to hatred. Do not look at me like that; I tell you it has! I *hate* Charles Carnagie."

She snatched up a light as she spoke, and left the room. Susan was very unhappy, and lay awake half the night. On the following morning Mr. Carnagie was no better, but he dressed and went into the town. Susan asked whether that was prudent. Oh, there was nothing like exertion to shake off a touch of the fever, was his reply, and it was the last day of Chard's stay.

Captain Chard rode up in the course of the day to take leave, and Mrs. Carnagie came down to receive him, but she had not previously joined her sister, afraid, Susan supposed, of a recurrence of the last

night's topic. They dined alone, Susan and her sister, Mr. Carnagie having said he should not be home for it; only monosyllables passed between them. Afterwards, Susan was surprised at seeing the carriage brought round, and Emma came down in a silk evening dress. There was a party at the Lettsoms'.

"Are you going out this evening?" she exclaimed, unable to prevent a shade of reproach in her tone. "Suppose your husband should come home ill—he seemed very unwell this morning."

"Ill! when he has been in the town all day! He is making himself comfortable at the mess, that is what he is doing. Good-bye, Susan."

As Susan stood in the verandah, she saw Ruth take down her mistress's bonnet and cloak, and place them in the carriage. What was that for? Could Emma be going to return home on foot? She leaned forward and asked her. No, was Mrs. Carnagie's answer, she was to return in Mrs. Jacobson's carriage.

Mr. Carnagie arrived soon after her departure, in a hired conveyance. He was much worse, but thought it was only through pelting about in the heat. He asked where Emma was, would not have a doctor fetched, but went to his chamber. In the morning, just before the hour for rising, one of the black women came to Susan's room, and said Mr. Carnagie was in a raging fever.

Susan started up in a fright. Was Mrs. Carnagie with him? Or which room was she in?

Mrs. Carnagie had not come home, was the servant's answer.

"How shameful!" murmured Susan, as she hastily dressed herself; "and her husband in this state!"

She sent off for the doctor, and then went to Ruth's apartment. Ruth was not in it. The bed had not been slept in. Susan was bewildered.

Mr. Carnagie was indeed in a raging fever, and calling out in his delirium. His wife must be got there instantly. Susan asked Jicko, as the black man who drove was usually called, what his mistress had said to him—whether he thought she might be still at the Lettsoms', or sleeping at Mrs. Jacobson's.

Jicko had no idea upon the point. Poor Jicko, in a planter's house, would have been flogged every day for stupidity. So Jicko and the carriage were despatched to both places. He came back and said Mrs. Carnagie was at neither.

Susan could make out nothing. She thought the shortest plan would be to go herself, and bring Emma with her. She entered the carriage, and told Jicko to drive to Mrs. Lettsoms'.

As they were going along, one of the officers, who was riding home from early duty, came cantering up to the carriage.

"How is Carnagie?" he asked, taking off his hat. "Has the fever laid hold of him? We feared it had, when we sent him home last night."

"I fear so," replied Susan. "He is delirious."

"Ah!—we thought that would be it. It is very unfortunate that Mrs. Carnagie should have been called to England just now—should have had to leave him at the moment of his illness."

"Called to England!" faltered Susan.

"I was on the ship last night with Chard, when she and her maid came on board. It is lucky, however, that Chard should be going; he will take care of her over. They have had a nice time for getting off; the captain made sail with daylight. Does your sister make a long stay, Miss Chase?"

Susan never knew what she answered. In another minute there was a vision of a young officer re-covering his head, and riding off, while she was left sick and speechless, in the carriage. She had presence of mind to order it to be turned home again, and she fell back in it in utter agony.

What a situation it was for her! Left alone in Mr. Carnagie's house; he in the delirium of a dangerous fever, and her sister, his wife, sailed for England with Captain Chard!

(To be continued.)

SONNET.

Sleep on, dear maid, the stars above thee shine;
Sleep, for the land is silent all around:
A quiet slumber and a sweet is thine,
Like a young babe's, so light it is, and sound.
In form thou art a woman full of grace,
In heart a child—a happy trustful child;
Yet never in thy waking hours thy face
Has looked so fair, thy lips so sweetly smiled.

Sleep! for the angel-guards are round thy bed,
Their white wings folded in the still night air:
All is so peaceful didst thou raise thy head
Thou wouldst not know the holy forms were there.
Yet so the pure in safety kept may be:
Sleep on, dear maid, for angels watch o'er thee.

ADRIENNE LE COUVREUR.

"'Tis strange, but true—for truth is always strange."

SO great a glamour of romance is shed about the names of certain historical persons that it might not unnaturally seem doubtful if they ever actually existed—if they were ever of the earth earthy. Supreme advantages of nature, and unusual trials and misfortunes, invest them with all the fascination of ideal women, and, as time overshadows the strange incidents of their lives, it becomes more and more difficult to disentangle fact from fiction.

Adrienne Le Couvreur, enveloped in this haze of poetry—like Héloise, Louise de la Vallière, Marie de Mancini—has grown so misty an impersonation that we might well believe her the creation of fancy, were it not for some faith in contemporary eulogists, and the indisputable archives of the Comédie Française.

It was Voltaire himself, inveterate sceptic and merciless critic, who placed her in the front rank of known tragic actresses, describing her as "the image of the Muses, Loves, and Graces;" and, after he had seen her in the *rôle* of Monime, Roxane, and Berenice, declaring that "she went beyond anything he had ever heard." The curious charm which belongs to those whose life is destined to be tragic, was felt by all who approached her, and her sad love story and mysterious death could hardly increase the interest she excited during the thirteen years in which she occupied the Paris stage without any serious rival except Mademoiselle Du Clos, who, in her fiftieth year, was certainly not powerful enough to hold her own against the rising star.

As if to make her history still more bewildering, it was dramatised by Scribe and Legouvé, and a fictitious Adrienne appeared upon the very boards where she herself had held her audience spell-bound. The authors, laying their scene in Paris, 1730—the year in which she died—adhered as closely as possible to the incidents of her real life, not even altering the names of those who played their part in it. They simply kept to facts which needed no embellishment; and Rachel, in the full glory of her reputation, so interpreted the beauty and tenderness of the character as to make it one of her principal triumphs. Adrienne showed her passion for the stage as a very young child; and so great a gift of recitation, that the bourgeois of Fismes, between Rheims and Soissons, where her father was a tradesman, used to entice her into their houses to hear her declaim. At fifteen she joined some young companions to give a representation of one of Racine's plays, but the small theatrical company was put to flight by the police, as out of order, and unprivileged.

So ended her first dramatic experiences, but not long after Pauline in 'Polyeucte' became one of her most popular parts. Le Grand gave her lessons, and an introduction to the managers of several provincial theatres, which he was right in thinking the best of schools. There she was so successful that her father left Fismes and established himself in Paris, deciding that she should adopt the stage as a profession, his own circumstances being sufficiently precarious. She perfected herself at the Théatre Français, an intelligent spectator of every performance—*se créa elle-même*, as was said by the Abbé Allainval, a cultivated man, and author of some excellent plays.

At eighteen she made her début in a tragedy by Crébillon, and the part of Angélique in 'Georges Daudin,' it being customary for a débutante to show what she could do on the same evening both in tragedy and comedy: *faire rire après faire pleurer* was then the pretension of all great actresses. It was said of her that, although devoted to tragedy, it was always a pleasure to hear her in comic parts, where by her grace, *finesse*, and manifest enjoyment, she captivated everybody. In 'Florentin,' a little comedy by La Fontaine, it was not only her audience she amused, but she amused herself!

The memoires of the day compare her beauty to that of a miniature painting in its extreme delicacy, and the justice of the comparison is manifest in the portraits that still exist of her. Her voice, though not possessing the power of La Champmeslé's magnificent organ, which it was said might be heard in the street if a door at the end of the theatre were left open, was not wanting in the strength required for passionate parts, and her supreme good taste prohibited every species of rant.

There were then two distinct theatrical manners—that of the official school, the Conservatoire, and the new manner, where one spoke naturally—*humainement*, as it was called.

The great expositor of this was Baron; but Adrienne, who only saw him in his old age, when he returned to the stage after thirty years' absence, had already found out for herself that it was possible to combine grandeur with simplicity and naturalness: she frequently ventured to put her own interpretation upon sentences whose orthodox expression did not satisfy her taste; and a story is told of her which proves how little general adulation imposes upon those who, if they satisfy an indiscriminate public, do not always satisfy themselves; and that a just criticism is of more value to a conscientious artist than all the plaudits in the world. One evening, in the midst of the most rapturous applause, she could not help remarking the silence of a single spectator, who, resisting the general enthusiasm, only murmured at rare intervals, and as if to himself, "*C'est bon, cela.*"

Puzzled at this eccentricity, she inquired, after the play was over, who the individual might be that was so hard to please, and learnt that it was Dumarsais, the eminent grammarian.

Determining to find the *mot d'enigme*, she invited him to dine with

her *tête-à-tête*, and when he came, having received him cordially, he entreated her to give him a speech from one of her favourite scenes.

She complied, and was again both puzzled and somewhat humiliated by the same expressive and disappointing silence, only broken by an occasional *bon cela.*

She then asked for an explanation.

"*Volontiers*, Mademoiselle," he replied, "only premising that should I be so unfortunate as to displease you, you shall be spared the annoyance of my company at dinner."

"Speak candidly," said Adrienne; "your reputation is well-known to me, and your face tells me that I shall be the gainer by whatever you may say."

"My opinion is this," said Dumarsais; "there is but one thing you need to eclipse all your rivals past and present—you must give to words the true value necessary for the full expression of their meaning."

The remark from such a source revealed certain defects of diction which marred the perfectness of her oratory, and which grated on the grammarian's over-sensitive ear. A battle had been going on in his mind between recognition of her genius and something wanting in its fulfilment. His *bon cela* testified to his approval of her simplicity, truth, and force of feeling, but her accentuation sometimes fell short of a highly-educated literary style.

Her early training was to blame for this; a faultless accent was hardly to be obtained in the theatres of Alsace, and the intelligent actress speedily recognised the importance of the criticism. She became his willing pupil, and was soon able to give what another eminent elocutionist has termed *the soul of the word.*

If Voltaire's saying be true, that love, and love only, is the soul of tragedy, his ideal of dramatic perfection was fulfilled by Adrienne Le Couvreur. No one had ever played the part of Racine's Berenice with such sensibility.

The tragedy is typical of a bygone style. Its simplicity of action and elegance of expression, all the delicacy which made it then so popular, could not in our own day render endurable five acts without a change of scene or any incident whatever. Such tenderness and such self-sacrifice would now be thought exaggerated, proper perhaps to poetry and the realms of fiction, but not arousing even there any profound enthusiasm.

It is not to be believed that the living Berenice was unacquainted with the passion she depicted, but she knew that sentiment is incompatible with serious study, and she was wedded to her profession. For years she led a solitary life in Paris, dismissing her adorers. There is nothing like hard work to destroy youth's first illusions, but there came a time, which comes to all, when she could not evade the one love which was to colour all her life, and to end in heart-break and a violent death.

Maurice de Saxe, a son of the Elector of Saxony and the beautiful Aurore de Königsmark, was the most brilliant figure of his day. At twenty years of age he was the hero of many campaigns. A gallant soldier and fascinating courtier, it was said of him by De Bouilmiers, that neither forts nor hearts could resist him; he became the ardent worshipper of Mademoiselle Le Couvreur. Her talents attracted him in a greater degree even than her personal charms, and although more soldier than scholar, he was ready to share her interest in every kind of literature and art, whilst she, in her turn, fully entered into his favourite studies in mechanism and fortification. For three years, the happiness of both appeared to be without a cloud, and in the words of La Fontaine's fable of "*Les deux Pigeons*," which has become historic, "*ils s'aimaient d'un amour tendre.*"

But the soldier's ambition only slumbered. Courland was vacant, and Maurice left Paris as a pretender to its sovereignty. Adrienne sold her jewels to provide the sinews of war, and waited for his return, a prey to anxious fears.

She was the first French actress who obtained social consideration. Her little house, Rue des Marais St. Germain, where Racine had lived, and which was afterwards occupied by Mademoiselle Clarion, became the *salon* which La Champmeslé endeavoured to form in vain. It was frequented by celebrated men and fashionable women; her sterling qualities and independent means had raised her from the class which was then considered to possess nothing but talent to recommend it. Distinguished personages gathered round her, but those *réunions* pleased her best when she was least beset by grandees, and could enjoy the society of her familiar friends, Voltaire, Dumarsais, Fontenelle, d'Argental, the Comte de Caylus, Madame Berthier, and Mademoiselle Aissé.

In one of her letters, recently published, she complains of the obligatory dissipation in which she finds herself in the midst of her disquietude for the absent. She had been long without news, and feared the worst. "The whole affair," she says, "resembles a romance, and I live in terror of the catastrophe."

Maurice's usual good fortune had deserted him, things went from bad to worse, and, threatened with captivity and death, he fled back to France.

Pure constancy was not the distinguishing virtue of the day, and Adrienne found herself deserted for the Duchesse de Bouillon, notorious for the number of her love affairs, *trés galante.* The piquancy of an attachment so uncertain and precarious attracted Maurice, who had become weary of Adrienne's serious and somewhat melancholy temper, and her dreams of a settled and tranquil affection.

Scenes of frantic jealousy took place, and on one memorable occasion the Hôtel de Bouillon became the theatre of war. At one of the Duchess's crowded receptions, when Mademoiselle Le Couvreur was called upon for a recitation, her fury passed all bounds, and she

pointedly addressed her hostess in a scene from 'Phédre' as a perfidious, hypocritical, and shameless woman.

The story of the Duchess's revenge in the shape of poisoned sweetmeats, met with much credence at the time, although she never ceased protesting her entire innocence; and St. Beuve inclines to believe her, in spite of the curious revelations of the Abbé Bouret—a young hump-backed priest who came to Paris to perfect himself in the art of painting.

He relates that he was sent for to the Hôtel de Bouillon to take a portrait in miniature of the Duchess. He was known to have a passion for the theatre, and during one of the sittings, the great lady inquired of him who, in his opinion, was the best actress of the day. He unhesitatingly pronounced the name of Mdlle. Le Couvreur.

The Duchess asked if he were personally acquainted with her, and urged him with some persistence to obtain the *entrée* to her receptions, which he might very easily do, as she was a patroness of all the arts.

He replied that he should esteem it a great honour, and that he would endeavour to obtain an introduction.

A few days after, the Duchess again asked him if he had gained access to the celebrated actress, and she made him write a letter, then and there, purporting to be a declaration of love from some high personage, which she desired him to find means of presenting to her; but the next day she told him to give back the letter, saying she had changed her mind and did not wish it to be delivered; that some sweetmeats would do better; and that if he would find himself that evening at the gate of the Tuileries overlooking the Pont Royal, she would send some one to confer with him.

Arriving at the appointed place he was joined by two men, one dressed with much magnificence, the other seemingly a valet, and both masked.

They led him along the quay to a place where the Duchess and another lady were seated on the parapet: she told him to go with the men and they would instruct him further. They went a short distance and then asked him if he were willing to gain a large sum of money: he said he was ready to do anything but a wicked action. They continued he had only to hold his tongue and his fortune would he made.

They rejoined the Duchess, who expressed herself well pleased with him, and she desired him to come to her Hôtel next day to go on with her miniature.

Whilst he was there, a lady thickly veiled came in and spoke privately to the Duchess: he heard the name of the Comte de Saxe frequently mentioned, and the Duchess wept and said she was very unhappy.

When her visitor went away, she began to speak slightingly of Mdlle. Le Couvreur, who, she said, was a bad and foolish woman, and that it would be doing the state a service to get rid of her. She continued

that he must go and meet the same men in the same place as before, and that they would give him some pastilles for the actress which would make her forget the Comte de Saxe, but that he must lose no time in getting access to her as the thing was urgent.

He accordingly met the Duchess's emissaries, who promised him six thousand pounds down, and a life pension of six hundred, and said that if he were content with the bargain, he must not be surprised if the affair turned out *a little violent*, and that even if she died he would run no danger, as measures were already taken to get him out of the country. He was enjoined on no account to return to the Hôtel de Bouillon, and was given a box of sweetmeats.

The Abbé (who must have been, according to his own showing, extraordinarily dull of apprehension) began to think that this was all very suspicious, and he determined to warn Mdlle. Le Couvreur.

He wrote anonymously, requesting her to meet a friend at the Luxembourg on an affair of the greatest importance, and as soon as she appeared, accompanied by Mdlle. Lamotte, he told her that she was threatened with poison. She asked if it came from the Theatre. "No." "Then," she exclaimed, "it comes from the Hôtel de Bouillon!" She told him to say nothing, but to visit her the next day, when she would tell him what to do.

The Comte de Saxe was with her when he arrived, and made him repeat his story word for word. He took the pastilles in order to have them analysed; they were found to contain poison, but not in sufficient quantity to destroy life.

The next day the Abbé Bouret was arrested and taken to St. Lazare, where he remained three months, during which time he was repeatedly examined and exhorted to retract the statements he had made, which he refused to do.

Mdlle. Le Couvreur was much distressed, and constantly interceded for him, implicitly believing every word of his story.

After a time he was set at liberty, but the Duc de Bouillon, finding the affair had become public, procured a second *lettre de cachet* on the plea of a false accusation, and the unfortunate Abbé was sent to the Bastile. From thence the confessor, a Jesuit priest, wrote a very significant letter to the lieutenant of police, stating that he had spoken at length with the Abbé, who denied that *he had calumniated anybody:* the letter ended with the words, "the thing is very terrible and serious."

Bouret's persistence, however, was not proof against a lengthened imprisonment—he retracted his accusation, and was set at liberty, disappearing from Paris altogether, and nothing more was ever heard of him. The rumours which had found much credence in the Paris world had begun to die away, when Adrienne Le Couvreur was seized with a violent and sudden illness: the poisoned pastilles were again openly discussed, and when it was known that she had passed away after a few hours' intense suffering, the most terrible suspicions became general.

Voltaire, who with the Comte de Saxe remained at her bedside, declared that her death was owing to a mistake in her medicine, a testimony which might have been thought conclusive had not everybody known for a fact that the poet was systematically opposed to all idea of poison. It was one of his determined disbeliefs.

So sudden was the seizure, that the Curé of St. Sulpice, who had been hastily summoned, arrived too late to administer the last sacraments ; and on this account, as well as her constant refusal to sign an act of repentance for her connection with what was then considered a scandalous profession, the rites of Christian burial were forbidden. Her body was carried through the streets by night in a common *fiacre*, and the place where it was laid was unknown or forgotten.

C. E. Meetkerke.

TO AN ALBATROSS.

Spread abroad thy mighty pinions,
Spirit of the wind and sea ;
Thine the ocean's wide dominions
With their mystic majesty :—
Where the restless billows proudly
Roll in triumph o'er the deep,
Or the baffled surf roars loudly
On some rock-defended steep.

When the stormy clouds are heaping
Gloomy mountains in the sky,
Then upon thy wild wing sweeping,
Like the wind thou rushest by ;
When the white-fringed waves are bounding
With a great and measured swell,
Does thy heart beat fast, responding
To the magic of the spell ?

Could my soul, like thee, go soaring
Into realms so pure and vast,
I would cease at once deploring
All the memory of the past !
Into realms so high and glist'ning,
Could I soar on pinions strong,
I would live for ever, list'ning
To the ocean's magic song.

Matt Hyland.

TRAVELLING WITH HALF A MILLION.

I.

IN the vaults of the Rothschild banking-house at Frankfort-on-the-Main there sat a young man, about thirty years of age, before a large open travelling trunk, which differed from others of the same kind only in being lined with zinc, and having two extremely complicated locks. He held in his hand a paper covered with figures, and beside him were two clerks, one quite an old man, who together packed the trunk with slender rouleaux of shining gold.

"Six thousand florins more make one hundred thousand," said the old man.

"That is right, Keblar," answered he who was seated, looking at his list.

Other kinds of coin came in their order; packet after packet was laid in the trunk, until it was nearly full.

"This will be very heavy," said Keblar, after counting and packing for some time.

"It will indeed," replied the young man, who was named Fernald; "but ten thousand foreign pistoles must still go in."

Keblar continued his work in silence. When it was finished, he raised one end of the trunk, to test the weight.

"Can it go?" asked Fernald, anxiously.

"Yes, I suppose so; but if comments are made about it, you had better say that you are carrying specimens of hardware."

"That is a capital idea. Now give me the key."

Keblar took out of his pocket a steel ring, from which hung keys of all sizes and shapes, and selecting one, handed it to Fernald, who, after locking the trunk, pocketed it carefully with his list.

"I must now receive the Baron's final orders, and take my leave of him," said Fernald. "Send the trunk to my lodgings, Keblar, and with it the letters I am to take to Vienna."

"I will attend to it, sir," said the old man.

All three then left the strong, heavily-fastened room, and Keblar closed the iron door securely after him.

Fernald was from an old burgher family of Frankfort; he was an *employé* in the great Rothschild banking business, and had a department which proved that the head of the establishment placed implicit confidence in his integrity. The Baron now entrusted him with a commission to his brother in Vienna, where he was to take the immense sum of nearly half a million of money.

He went directly from the vault to Baron Rothschild's counting-

room, where his final instructions were given him. As the great man dismissed him, he inquired: "Do you take a servant with you?"

"Yes, Baron; my old Conrad."

"Is he an old man?"

"Old, but trusty."

"Well, you know him better than I; but, my dear fellow, trust no one farther than you can see him, for we have so many people in the business, that this journey is no secret; if there should be a traitor among us, *our* gold and *your* throat run a great risk. Here," he added, "is a document from the Austrian Embassy to the head of the police department, so that in case of need a force can be immediately placed under your direction. Now, farewell, my young friend, and may God protect you!"

"Have no anxiety, Baron; I shall doubtless be unmolested. As soon as I reach Vienna, I will announce the fact to you," said Fernald, taking his credentials.

"Do so; and once more, farewell."

Fernald intended to start the following morning at five o'clock, and to travel in the Baron's *caléche* with post-horses; for at the date of our narrative railroads were unknown in the country. It was in the year 1833, shortly after the so-called "Frankfort riot"—that bold outbreak of rash students upon the city police, which led to so many stringent and annoying rules and regulations.

After Fernald had completed his preparations for the morrow, finding he had the evening before him, he resolved to spend it with a small *réunion* which he knew would be assembled at the house of the Secretary of Legation.

Fernald had made the acquaintance of this gentleman by transacting business with him at the bank, and having once accepted an invitation to his house, he frequently directed his steps to its hospitable threshold; for he found there a powerful magnet, and was now a regular guest on the evenings when Mr. von Fridburg received his friends.

This being one of these occasions, Fernald soon found himself in the midst of a gay and fashionable company. After paying his respects to the lady of the house, and chatting familiarly with one or two acquaintances, he turned towards a lady, the centre of a group of gentlemen, who all paid marked attention to her brilliant and animated conversation. She was about six-and-twenty years old, had large sparkling black eyes, great profusion of dark hair, clear, pale complexion, and an exquisitely shaped head: and although the first bloom of youth was passed, this young widow was so cultivated, piquant, and witty, that she was always surrounded by admirers. She had lately come to Frankfort, having always lived upon the Lower Rhine, but being quite independent since the death of her husband, had taken up her abode in what she declared to be her favourite city. She had

become acquainted with Madame von Fridburg by occupying the next box at the Opera for a whole season, and had been received, through her, into a few families. The ladies considered her too coquettish, but the gentlemen seemed to think she had no faults, and Fernald was especially attentive.

"So you are going to Vienna," she said, as Fernald took a vacant chair near her, and the other gentlemen, one by one, withdrew.

"Yes, Madame Bernard; to-morrow very early," answered the young man. "If I can do anything for you there, it will give me the greatest pleasure."

"Oh, thank you! I have not any commissions for Vienna; indeed, I know no one in all the city. Do you remain long?"

"I go on business that will only detain me a few days; but even that is too long, for my heart will be here."

Madame Bernard threw her head back with a very animated gesture, and half-turning to him, said mockingly:

"And do you expect me to believe that? Any young man must be rejoiced to travel in this lovely spring weather, especially to so gay and fascinating a place as Vienna."

"It grieves me that my assurance is met with such total unbelief," said Fernald. "I feel inclined to quote the old German proverb: 'Women will believe anything but the truth.'"

"Well, that is quite natural," replied Madame von Bernard, laughing. "It is very hard to believe what is disagreeable, and truth almost always is so."

"Are the feelings and emotions which your sex inspire in the hearts of men so disagreeable and incredible?"

She blushed slightly, but shrugged her shoulders, and was about to make some saucy reply, when a servant approaching, said a few words in an undertone, and handed her a small folded paper.

"The young man is below, and awaits an answer," Fernald heard him say.

Madame von Bernard changed colour visibly; she tore open the note, read it hastily, and turning to the servant, said:

"Tell him yes. All is right."

The servant withdrew. Fernald, who felt himself overpowered by jealousy at this little scene, whispered sarcastically:

"So you have a secret correspondence?"

She nodded, smiling abstractedly, rose, and went into the anteroom, where she seemed to wish to be alone. In this, however, she was not gratified, for several young men approached, and tried to draw her into conversation. Fernald, who had followed at a little distance, could not but observe how shortly and laconically she answered them; it seemed almost as if her eye sought him; and lo! he was not mistaken—she bowed a somewhat haughty dismissal to the surrounding group, and went directly across to Fernald.

"Listen to me, Mr. Fernald," she said, drawing him aside. "You

are going early to-morrow morning to Vienna—what would you say if I proposed your taking charge of a lady thither?"

"A lady? A friend of yours? I should be most happy——"

"Do not speak so loud, I beg. I do not allude to a friend, but to myself."

"You? Impossible!"

"I have this moment received some news which obliges me to go directly to Vienna."

"To Vienna? But you just said you knew no one——"

"I said so; but I have since learned that an aunt, my only relative, has been taken suddenly ill there, passing through on her way from Italy."

"I am truly sorry for the cause," said Fernald, "but I am thankful that I am to have such a delightful travelling companion; for nothing in the world would make me so happy as to have you accept a seat in my carriage."

"Then will you, like a true knight, protect me from all the dangers of the way? Oh! one thing more. I have a servant whom I would like to take with me. On such a journey, a maid is only a nuisance, but a man is always useful."

"A very good idea, and suits me exactly," cried Fernald. "Is he young, strong, and trusty?"

"He possesses all these qualities, and is an excellent servant."

"Then I will leave my own at home, as he will be quite unnecessary. So it is settled, we take your man."

"There is still a little difficulty," said Madame von Bernard, thoughtfully; "his name is not on my passport, and he has none of his own, and as one cannot be procured this evening, I fear you will get into trouble. You see," she said, with her most gracious smile, "your travelling companion begins already to annoy you."

"On the contrary, I am happy to say I can serve you also in this difficulty," cried Fernald. "The Baron has put me in possession of a paper that will be an 'open sesame' for all police regulations."

"I thank you from my heart," said Madame Bernard, with a beaming look. "Pray tell no one of my sudden flight; for I should have to answer a thousand questions, prompted by mere idle curiosity, and that is so tiresome. Good-night! At what time shall I be ready in the morning?"

"If five o'clock is not too early, I will call for you at that hour."

"Very well. Once more, good-night!"

She left him in such a state of joyful excitement, that he could only think of the pleasure he promised himself on the morrow, and never reflected for a minute upon the fact that a note brought by a young man caused her strange uneasiness, even before opening it. As the company now had no longer attractions for him, he departed unobserved, in order to take the rest needful for his early journey.

II.

It was precisely five o'clock on the following morning when Fernald drove up to Madame von Bernard's dwelling, in the Baron's comfortable covered carriage, drawn by two stout horses. The important trunk was firmly screwed on behind. The house door opened as they stopped, and a young man in grey livery came out, and bowing respectfully, announced that Madame Bernard would be ready directly. He then brought out a small trunk and handbox, and put them upon the box. In a few minutes Madame Bernard appeared, closely veiled, and enveloped in a costly India shawl. Fernald sprang to meet her, and lifted her in with assiduous care. He then seated himself beside her, the servant closed the door, sprang up beside the postilion, who cracked his whip, and off they started at a brisk trot.

The post-horn sounded, and the carriage clattered so over the stony pavement, that conversation at first was impossible; but soon the wheels rolled lightly along the smooth highway, and Fernald commenced conversing, obtaining, however, only abstracted replies from his companion. He observed that she lacked that ease which she usually possessed in such a remarkable degree. Did anxiety for her aunt trouble her? or did she regret the unconventional step she had taken, in placing herself under his protection? Either was probable; but Fernald thought more of the latter, and remembered, with a thrill of joy, that she could not now draw back. Soon their conversation came to a standstill, and Madame von Bernard threw herself back and closed her eyes, as if to regain her morning nap.

When they arrived at the first station, where they were to change horses, a Bavarian official thrust his head in the carriage window, and said, laconically: "Your passports!"

Fernald drew forth his, and handed it to him with Madame Bernard's, who said—"My servant's name is not upon mine; I decided so late to take him, that there was no time to obtain his passport."

"Very well; then he cannot go; we have the most stringent orders," replied the official, in a phlegmatic but utterly resolute tone.

Fernald saw that she turned pale, and she cast a helpless look at him.

"Do not be troubled," he said, with a reassuring smile; "this will make all right;" and he handed a folded document to the officer.

"The servant accompanies *me*," he added.

The police officer, after glancing over the paper, returned it to Fernald, with a respectful bow, and told him that he would immediately see that the passports were *viséd*.

He went away with them in his hand. The servant, meanwhile, had been an interested spectator of this transaction, and Fernald noticed his face for the first time. He liked his appearance extremely, for his countenance was handsome and intelligent, set in curling chestnut locks, and enlivened by dancing brown eyes. He could have been only about twenty, for a dark down covered his upper lip. Fernald looked at him with admiration, and thought Madame von Bernard had the handsomest lackey ever seen in a lady's service.

The horses were brought out, and Fernald alighted to see that his precious trunk was safe. After awhile the official brought back the passports, and as the young man turned quickly to hand hers to Madame Bernard, he saw a peculiar look of intelligence pass between herself and the servant. He felt a sudden pang of jealousy; but he instantly suppressed it, and thought—"What folly! I ought to be ashamed of myself," and jumped into the carriage, which started directly.

"It will be better," said Fernald, "to have your servant pass for mine the rest of the way—it simplifies the affair."

"Oh, thank you!" replied his companion eagerly; "but I had no idea the police were so strict."

"They are—especially now. I must know the name of your man."

"His name is Lippman—Otto Lippman."

"From Frankfort?"

"No, not from there; you come from Nassau, do you not, Lippman?"

"From Hadamar, Madame!" answered the youth, who had leaned back to reply to his mistress's question.

Fernald thought he saw again an expression in the man's eyes that was exceedingly disagreeable to him, for he felt that he had a spy upon his movements, if nothing else. In consequence, conversation flagged still more. Fernald tried to talk with his companion about her former place of residence, but found it impossible to draw her out; she appeared ill at ease and anxious. Was her anxiety on account of her servant?

One thing was certain, there was something peculiar about this man. He talked at times with the postilion, a sulky-looking, broad-shouldered fellow, with a villainous scar across his brow and nose; the carriage made such a noise that Fernald could not hear what they said, but observed that the servant spoke very pure German, and certainly not the Hadamar dialect. Sometimes he looked round into the carriage, and glanced at his mistress with an expression decidedly *not* suitable for a servant. He wore, as was proper, rough leather gloves; but as he drew one of them off, Fernald saw a delicate white hand, with beautifully shaped nails—a hand which decidedly could *not* belong to a servant.

Fernald became more uncomfortable as time went on. Had this charming woman, with whom he was more in love than he had confessed to himself, deceived him about this fellow?—was he a lover in disguise, whom she took with her? Did he, in his simple good nature, assist at an elopement? Was this why the passport was not forthcoming? Might not the story of the sick aunt have been improvised for the occasion? How often had he heard Madame Bernard called coquettish and imprudent; and above all, why must he remember just now, that no one really knew anything about her?

All these thoughts rushed tumultuously through his mind, and rendered him thoroughly wretched. He finally leaned back in the corner of the carriage, and closed his eyes. He wished to appear to sleep, however ungallant this might seem, in order to observe if any communication passed between mistress and servant.

His ruse soon succeeded. He felt that Madame Bernard leaned forward, and heard her say, "Lippman!"

The servant replied, respectfully—"Well, Madame?"

"Did you remember to put my crochet needle into the trunk?"

"Yes, Madame; I packed it."

At first Fernald's heart beat high with joy, for the tone and question was only that suitable to a servant; but he presently reflected that a man did not usually take charge of such articles as crochet needles and the like, and he began to suspect that the question was put to test the reality of his slumbers. He resolved, therefore, still to feign sleep for awhile. The carriage went very slowly, for they were come to a mountainous region, where the road ascended woody hills, and then plunged into deep valleys. The horses went apparently with great difficulty, and as the carriage no longer rattled, Fernald could hear distinctly each word spoken upon the box.

The postilion cracked his heavy whip in vain, the horses strained every nerve, but could go no faster; finally he said, with an oath—"What cursedly heavy baggage!"

"You only have three passengers and two trunks," replied Lippman. "I am sure that is not much."

"No, not much," answered the postilion; "but they are heavy enough."

"Then you cannot be accustomed to carry much baggage?"

"I am not accustomed to carry *such*; they are very rare," said the postilion, with a short, dry laugh.

"What are rare? Such trunks as ours?"

"Why, yes. A man does not often see one exactly like that screwed on behind us," said the postilion, knowingly.

"I know nothing about it," replied Lippman, curtly.

This conversation forced upon Fernald an unpleasant discovery; namely, that the driver knew the contents of his trunk. It occurred to him that he would have preferred that this villainous-looking person

who drove him through this solitary and thickly-wooded region should *not* have known that he had with him half a million of money. His thoughts, however, were so taken up with Madame Bernard and her servant, that this only caused him a moment's uneasiness.

The carriage stopped, so that Fernald felt obliged to awake suddenly, and saw the postilion and his companion alight, that the weary horses might have less to carry. Soon they fell back, and commenced talking earnestly and rapidly. Fernald wondered if they were conversing about the trunk, perhaps laying some plot, and he regretted most heartily that he had exchanged his own trusty servant for this detestable young man. Involuntarily his hand fell upon the two loaded revolvers in the pocket of the carriage; then turning to his companion, he commenced an animated conversation. She now appeared at ease, and more like herself than before, and as he met the glance of her beautiful eyes, and listened to her clear voice, he felt truly ashamed of his doubts.

After the two men had resumed their seat, upon the box, a long pause ensued. Presently Fernald observed that Lippman wrote something in his pocket-book, and, tearing out the leaf, folded it into the shape of a note, and placed it in his glove.

"Ah!" thought Fernald, his wrath rising anew—"a *billet-doux* for Madame Bernard! As soon as I turn round it will be thrown to her!"

He felt redoubled hatred towards Lippman; if a gendarme had been near he would have given him into custody; but no such person was to be seen.

Soon they arrived at the next stopping-place. On the way thither Fernald had reasoned with himself, and said revenge was ignoble; he would not disgrace Madame Bernard, but he *would* tell her that he had discovered her deception—had seen through her trick, and that he would magnanimously protect her and her lover through all danger. Still, he found it very hard to bring himself to this generous act; he, who loved her so madly, was, against his will, the party to her elopement! It was a despicable affair; but he was resolved to carry out his noble intention.

They now had arrived at the little village, where they were not only to change horses, but to dine. It was a highly picturesque, but very miserable place where they were obliged to wait—an old inn, with a large, old-fashioned courtyard, with arms cut in the stone gateway. They alighted, and were shown by the rosy hostess into a large room on the first floor. While Fernald was ordering dinner, he watched Madame Bernard closely, in a mirror that hung opposite to him, and found that he had not been mistaken; Lippman, in passing her, imagining himself unobserved, slipped something into her hand.

She took it quite as if she were accustomed to such confidences, and walked to the bay-window to read it unnoticed. Poor Fernald's heart throbbed violently with jealousy and grief. He walked rapidly

up and down the room, in the greatest agitation. A horrible thought had crossed his brain, and he could not rid himself of it. Who had told him that this was Madame Bernard's lover? If she had planned an elopement, what need had she of his protection? Was she not independent and free to marry her servant, if she wished! And Lippman was no servant; that he could see with half an eye. No, no; far more likely that the plot concerned his valuable trunk! Did not the postilion know its contents? and very probably half Frankfort knew the object of his journey. How many times had he heard of even titled swindlers? He felt himself the helpless victim of a fiendish conspiracy. But no, he would not believe it; the idea was too monstrous, too terrible. Fernald was ashamed of his thoughts, but could not stifle them, when Madame Bernard suddenly turned and asked him some question concerning their future journey.

He answered her as curtly as possible.

"Do you know," she said, smiling, "that you look very cross, and I might say fierce, besides having been remarkably silent for some time? Confess, now, that you regret having taken me for a travelling companion, and wish me at Jericho! Do you not?"

This was said with the most artless manner and the sweetest of smiles; but neither had its usual effect upon the unhappy man.

"Does she try to play with me?" he asked himself, grimly. "Madame," he answered, somewhat brusquely, "I need not assure you that your company is agreeable to me at any time; but I must confess to you that the presence of Otto Lippman is far from being so. The man is no servant; his livery is a masquerade; and while on the one hand your want of confidence wounds me to the quick, on the other I have reasons of my own for being very watchful and suspicious of a strange companion."

At these words Madame Bernard turned as pale as ashes. She looked at him in silence, as if stunned, and approaching him half whispered: "Have you, then, discovered this?"

"I have perceived it; and must ask you, decidedly, for an explanation!"

"You are right—quite right," she answered, quickly. "I have treated you unfairly; but Heaven knows it was not my fault. I have the most perfect confidence in your nobleness and generosity, but my brother wished—he required it, or I should at once have told you, Herr Fernald."

"Your *brother* wished—required?"

"It is of my brother that you were speaking," she whispered, in the greatest excitement. "I will confess all to you. It is right that you should know the whole——"

"Is the young man your brother?" cried Fernald, joyfully.

"He is my brother," replied Madame Bernard.

"But why is he thus disguised?"

"This disguise he was obliged to take in consequence of his mad

folly, in which he persisted, deaf to all my entreaties. He is a student in his first year at Heidelberg, and came here to take part in that outbreak, the particulars of which you know so well. Being compromised deeply by it, he took refuge with me, instead of escaping to a foreign land, and I have concealed him for two months past."

"This, then, is the meaning of the riddle!" said Fernald, ready to ask her pardon upon his knees, for his base doubts.

"This is the secret," said she, "which I give unreservedly into your keeping."

"And now you intend to pass him on in this disguise?"

"That is my intention. At first escape was impossible; the police were so strict, that we were obliged to wait. Lately I have been daily more anxious and impatient; and last night, when a friend of my brother's brought me a note suggesting this plan, I was glad to avail myself of it. Here, briefly, you have the whole story," she concluded; "and now you know all!"

"Yes, enough to make me heartily ashamed to stand before you," said Fernald, "and you cannot imagine how happy it makes me to be of service to you."

She gave him her hand with a look of gratitude, and he pressed it eagerly to his lips.

"Believe me," he said, "not a hair of your brother's head shall be injured; I will answer for it with my life. But what will you do—not take him to Vienna, surely?"

"No, indeed. I intend to go as far as Salzburg only; there he can reach Switzerland without fear of detection."

"Without doubt, an excellent plan," said Fernald; "but shall I, then, only accompany you as far as Salzburg?" he added, in a melancholy tone.

Madame Bernard did not answer, but laid her finger on her lips, for just then the maid entered to lay the table.

"Lay three plates," said he to the latter.

"Oh, that is quite unnecessary," whispered Madame Bernard; "every one would think it strange for the master and servant to eat together. Let him stay in the servants' hall."

"Very well; as you like." Then turning to the maid—"Only two!"

"And what kind of a note did Lippman hand you just now?" asked Fernald, in a low tone, turning to his companion.

She changed colour slightly, saying: "Did you see that, too?"

"My eye observes very watchfully all that concerns you in any way."

"It appears," she said, glancing at him with a bright smile, "that nothing escapes you."

"May I not know the contents of this note?"

"That you never shall," answered she, quickly.

"More secrets still!"

"In this you must submit."

"I submit to any yoke you lay upon me."

With these words he was about to take her hand, but she turned from him, blushing deeply, and at the same instant the hostess entered with a smoking soup-tureen.

"Tell the postilion to harness, while we dine," said Fernald.

"I think he is doing so now," replied the woman.

"Then he can wait," replied Fernald carelessly.

III.

When they had spent half an hour at the table, Madame Bernard told the maid to call her servant, and Fernald sent for the postilion to drive up. After some time, the maid returned, and said she could not find the servant, and the postilion had driven on in advance.

"Gone on! without me!" cried Fernald, in astonishment.

"Did you not order him to do so?" asked the hostess, who had just entered, and seemed rather disturbed; "they tell me he drove away like mad."

"Worse and worse!" exclaimed Fernald; "but why did I not hear it roll away?"

"You said the carriage must not remain standing in the street, so he drove out the back way, from which a lane leads to the city gate."

"Now Heaven help me!" cried Fernald in the greatest excitement. "Send for the burgomaster—mounted police—and a hundred thalers to any one who will have a horse ready saddled in ten minutes—a fast one, mind!"

Great confusion ensued; some ran for the burgomaster—others for the police, and Fernald in a few minutes saw a strong fresh horse before the door. The reins were already in his hand, but he dropped them, and turned to Madame Bernard, who came to the window, pale and frightened, and calling in vain for Lippman.

"Is he not there? Have you not yet found this Lippman?" cried Fernald, with an indescribably scornful emphasis on the name

"Heaven only knows where he is," she replied, bursting into tears.

"Oh, but I know too well," cried he, beside himself with rage and disappointment. "I see I am the victim of a plot; yes, of the most abominable, infamous plot ever planned."

With these words, he leaped into the saddle, just as the burgomaster, a fat man in his shirtsleeves, came running breathlessly round the corner.

"Sir," said Fernald, turning to him, "a swindler and my postilion

have escaped with my carriage—send all the force you can collect after them. An immense sum of money is contained in a trunk screwed on behind—he who restores it to me uninjured and intact, shall receive ten thousand francs reward—therefore despatch."

With these words, he set off at full gallop, leaving the burgomaster, pale as his shirt, and staring after him in mute amazement.

The carriage had the advantage of starting half an hour before him, and as Fernald urged his horse to a still faster pace, he felt what a small chance he had of overtaking it; for although loaded so heavily, two horses could certainly travel full as fast as one; but it was his only hope, and he caught at it in desperation. He tore along at a frantic pace, hoping at each turn to see the carriage in the distance; but this hope deceived him constantly. He met a couple of lumber waggons and some foot passengers from time to time; he asked them eagerly, if they had seen a carriage pass: they would reply, "Yes, half an hour ago."

Presently, he met two horses all harnessed, who browsed by the wayside. He looked at them earnestly. Surely they were the same that brought him here; but where was their driver, the man with the scar? he should be back in the city by this time. How did the horses come here? He too must be in the plot, and had probably ridden on, met the new postilion, and let his horses go. Yes, he was convinced this must be the case; and so much the worse, for he had now to deal with three conspirators instead of two, and he remembered, with a thrill, that his pistols were left in the carriage, and were now, no doubt, in the hands of the villains.

A wild rage overcame him as he thought how completely he had been deceived and entrapped by the woman in whom he had felt such confidence. By his folly, his weakness, he had lost the money entrusted to him, and with it his honour and reputation! Oh, how willingly would he have given his life to recover these lost treasures! He whipped and spurred his weary steed unmercifully, who now began to slacken his pace and breathed painfully. The poor animal ran up hill and down hill; the dust and gravel flew; but all in vain. Nothing was in sight. As he made a sharp turn, full a mile of the highway stretched before him, but nothing was to be seen on any part of it. At this moment the worn-out horse stumbled and fell; Fernald raised him, but he could hardly stand, and, after going feebly a few steps, fell again, and did not attempt to rise.

Fernald found his left leg was under the creature's body; he drew it out, bruised but uninjured; as for the pain of the limb, he did not feel it, for he could have wept from sheer despair. He sat on the ground by the side of his fallen horse, who lay covered with sweat and foam, uttering from time to time a low whinny. He looked at the animal, and, covering his face with his hands, murmured brokenly, "Now all is lost!"

Presently he looked back towards the town. Was no one coming

to assist him? Did nobody care for the reward? No! not a man appeared in all the dreary distance.

Fernald did not dare to give up the pursuit. He resolved to go on foot to the next station; and as he rose to shake the dust from his clothes, he saw at the top of an extremely distant hill two horses' heads. An involuntary impulse forced him to look at them. Now a *calèche* appeared behind them; how much it looked like *his calèche*—the horses began to trot rapidly towards him—they came nearer; he rubbed his eyes and believed himself dreaming, for *Lippman* sat upon the box, and swung the whip carelessly from side to side.

As he caught sight of Fernald, he nodded gaily, and soon drew up before the amazed and overjoyed man. "Here are your carriage and your trunk all safe, Mr. Fernald!" he cried, springing from the box. "Heaven be praised that I have been able to save it for you.

"You—*you* saved it!" said Fernald, breathlessly, feeling as if a sentence of death had been remitted.

"A lucky chance enabled me to spoil the fine plans of those two knaves," replied the youth, "while you and my sis—that is, my mistress—"

"I know that Madame Bernard is your sister—she told me so."

"I see you know everything. Well, while you two sat at dinner, I thought I would stroll about the town a little. As I stood looking at the ancient carving on the gateway, I heard the measured sound of horses' feet approaching with great rapidity. I recognised our carriage directly, and at first thought the horses were running away; but then of course the coachman would not whip them so severely. Suddenly, the trunk occurred to me. I concealed myself in the shadow of the gateway, and as the vehicle thundered by, made a spring, and found myself perched upon the precious trunk.

"There I sat," continued the young man, "and had time to think over the situation. I felt convinced your trunk was being stolen—but what could I do to hinder it? I knew there were pistols in the carriage; but what good would that do to me? Well, I thought, time will show; so I kicked my heels on the trunk, and a mad ride I had, up hill and down. At last the fellow slackened his speed, and then he shouted aloud. I looked round the corner of the carriage, to see what would happen next—it was just the other side of the hill. A road led off into the woods, and there stood the postilion with the scar, awaiting the booty with folded arms. His horses were by him, and he had evidently come to take charge of the trunk, and carry it off, Heaven knows where.

"This was an unpleasant discovery for me. I racked my brains to think how to deal with them, but resolved to leave it to my lucky stars.

"'There you are,' I heard the fellow with the scar call out. 'Has all turned out well?'

"'Why not?' was answered from the box. 'Come, drive off your horses; they must not be found here.'

"The other led his beasts into the middle of the road, turned their heads homewards, and gave them some sharp cuts, which set them off in full trot. The next moment would have discovered me, and I dared not be found weaponless. I slipped from the trunk, glided swiftly around the carriage, and, as their backs were turned, succeeded in getting in and seizing your pistols; then leaned quietly back in the corner. Just then, one shouted—'All right; go ahead!' and came to the door to jump in.

"I must confess that I now regret what I did; but the man's ugly red face, and his look of rage at seeing me, were so utterly repulsive that I lost control of myself, and fired. I trust I have not killed him. He fell, grasping his shoulder, and I think I wounded him there."

"And the other?" said Fernald, who had listened with breathless attention.

"The other had discovered me, just as I fired, and now was feeling for his knife; but him, alone, I did not fear. I pointed the other pistol at him, and cried, 'You are a thief, and I will shoot you, as I did that other dog, if you do not leave immediately—away with you!' He went away, cursing me with all his might, and left me room to turn; this I did with some difficulty, as I felt obliged to keep my eye and the pistol both upon him; but he withdrew to his wounded comrade; I whipped up, and here we are!"

"How shall I thank you?" cried Fernald. "This is the bravest deed I ever heard of! You know not what you have saved me by your decision, your boldness and presence of mind."

"I will drive you home, if you will get in," said the student, anxious to stop his praise and commendation. "My sister will be uneasy."

"Yes, yes; let us go."

"Shall I continue to drive?"

"Yes, by all means. But let me sit on the box beside you, that we may talk together. You are a hero—a perfect treasure of a student."

He got up beside him, and the tired horses fell into a slow trot.

"Do, pray, tell me your name? I do not yet know it," said Fernald.

"I am called Leonard Dorneck."

"And you are a student, compromised by taking part in the late riot?"

"Alas! yes."

"I will assist you, were you involved ever so deeply," cried Fernald, confidently.

"I assure you, I shall not refuse your help," said Dorneck, laughing.

"But," said Fernald, with a deep sigh, "you must do the same for me."

"You? What do you mean?"

"I feel myself laden with a great sin, which concerns you and your sister. I am not troubled so much about you. Your sister, I feel, will never forgive me."

"Well, confess to my sister, and beg for pardon; you will get it. She thinks rather highly of you already, and I wrote her a little note to-day, congratulating her upon her conquest, and giving my consent to any little arrangements you may make; so you see you have not much to fear."

"Was that the purport of your note?" cried Fernald. Without waiting for an answer, he continued: "Nevertheless, I hardly dare to come into your sister's presence."

"Oh, ho!" said Dorneck; "what's the trouble?"

"I will tell you, that you can see what a position I am in. I believed, a while ago, that you and your sister had conspired together to rob and cheat me."

"The devil you did," said the youth, frowning; "that looks bad."

"I hate and despise myself for it; but it is so."

"Then one of us must shoot the other," said Dorneck, soberly.

"The pistols are in the carriage. I will give you satisfaction if you demand it."

"My sister is very fond of me, and cares a little for you, so that would not mend the matter," said the student, in a fit of laughter. "It is best not to take it too tragically. A man who has charge of half a million may well be suspicious. I have never been in such a predicament, and trust I never shall be; but after due consideration, I pardon you."

"That is noble and generous of you; but—your sister?"

"As you have confessed your fault so openly to me, I promise not to tell her anything about it."

"But I was so angry and excited, that I told her myself."

"Fie! that was a false move."

"Now you see how unhappy I am."

"Nonsense! you have your money again; that is the principal thing!"

"Not at all; no money could console me for the treasure I have lost."

Dorneck threw a keen glance at him. In the despair which Fernald's features so plainly showed, there seemed to be something that amused him.

"Let us hope for the best," he said, finally, with a roguish smile. "I think if you fail, that I can assist you, even at the worst."

A rider just them came to meet them. It was a gendarme, whom the tardy burgomaster had just despatched.

They told him of the adventure, and sent him in search of the wounded man.

At last they reached the town. Fernald's heart beat high as he alighted at the gate, where the hostess and burgomaster stood, surrounded by a gaping crowd, to whom they were explaining what the reward was, and how they might obtain it. They were excessively surprised to see the carriage return, and asked a hundred questions, which Fernald cut short, and after asking the burgomaster for an armed guard for the carriage, he promised to report to him shortly with Dorneck.

"Heaven protect me, if I am to appear before the government officials," whispered the latter.

"Never mind," replied Fernald; "I will be security for you—now for your sister!"

Madame von Bernard had gone to her room in a state of agitation perfectly indescribable, and going to the window, had seen their return. She now flew to meet them and threw herself into her brother's arms.

"Oh, Leonard, Leonard!" she cried, weeping, "what have I suffered on your account!"

Dorneck disengaged himself gently from her, and leading her back into her room, said, as he beckoned Fernald to follow:

"Dear Frida, I truly believe you have been in great distress, but it is all over, now that we three are together again; but here is one whose grief is far greater, for he feels he does not deserve his good fortune, since he has insulted you unpardonably."

Madame grew pale, and was about to turn away; but her brother seized her hand, and said:

"However unpardonable it was, still you must forgive him, Frida; nothing else will do. For I can assure you most solemnly, that the recovery of half a million of money did not console him for the loss of your favour. I think one should forgive such repentance as that proves!"

Madame Bernard looked with a smile at her handsome brother, and then shyly at Fernald, who, at this captivating glance, fell upon his knees, and raised her hand to his lips.

"Oh, do not let me suffer all my life, for the fault of one evil moment!" he cried fervently.

"You have wounded me deeply," she replied, hesitatingly; "but, if my brother speaks truly, I shall be obliged to pardon you, and make peace. So rise, and tell me all that has happened since you left me in so different a way," she added, archly.

"You restore life to me," said Fernald, springing to his feet. "Let your brother tell you all about the rescue, which he alone and unaided performed, and in the meantime I will see that all cause for anxiety about him shall be put aside. May I write here?"

"Certainly; I will bring you pen and ink."

While Dorneck related the whole adventure to his sister, Fernald wrote. He announced to his chief, that Leonard Dorneck had saved

this immense sum of money by his coolness and bravery, and as a reward he demanded for him a passport, all in proper order, and a full pardon for his past misdemeanors. As soon as this was finished, he sent it off by a special messenger.

Fernald and Dorneck then went to the burgomaster, who, after glancing at Fernald's important document, asked no impertinent questions about the student, but took their depositions, which were necessary for the arrest of the two rascals.

After this they were obliged to wait in this little town, and amuse themselves as well as they could, until an answer came from the great Baron in Frankfort. Madame von Bernard had now an opportunity to heap burning coals of fire on Fernald's head, and in spite of this made him happier than he had ever been in his life. And when the Baron's answer came, in a few days, with congratulations that all had turned out so well, and with Dorneck's passport *viséd*, according to order, he might also have added congratulations to the happy couple on their engagement.

The next morning, two *calèches* stood before the inn; one contained Madame Bernard and her scapegrace of a brother, who were going to Heidelberg, from whence she was to return to Frankfort. Fernald was in his own, on the top of which sat a royal Bavarian gendarme to protect the precious trunk the rest of the way to Vienna.

One fortnight after, he returned safely to Frankfort, having delivered the valuable trunk to the proper authorities, and bringing with him a most acceptable gift for his betrothed—the full and entire pardon of her brother.

Their marriage soon took place, and from that day forward Fernald never found cause to regret the journey he had taken with half a million of money.

MR. WARRENNE:
MEDICAL PRACTITIONER.

CHAPTER V.

A NEW LIFE.

IT may be supposed that Leonard Warrenne did not much enjoy his new mode of life. The transition from a beautiful part of the country to the heart of London was disagreeable enough; but the class of people among whom he was thrown as a merchant's clerk was still more repulsive to his taste. He was obliged to dine at an eating-house, near his office, which was frequented by people "in his own class of life," to use his own phrase in speaking of them, whose tone of voice, language, gestures, sentiments, and mode of eating, sent a thrill of horror through him whenever he came near them. He formed no acquaintance with any of these persons, who all belonged to different establishments; and in the house to which he was attached, there were but two other clerks in his particular department—with both of these he was on very civil terms; with the rest of the officials he was hardly acquainted by sight.

The office where he daily attended was a small, dark room, with that peculiar air of closeness inseparable from every place in the City: a place where you find your hands want washing every ten minutes, though you cannot exactly detect the cause of the defilement. There was a high desk and stool, that uneasy throne which in so many cases leads to the sovereignty of wealth; the desk divided in half by a brass rail and green curtain, on one side of which the ancient clerk plied his pen; the other was the appointed place of Master Leonard. This old clerk, the head of the establishment (under the partners), was a man of some intelligence, and much kindness of heart, with rough manners, and an unaccountable habit of swearing great oaths on small occasions. The second clerk was a hard-headed, sober man of business, ungainly in person, not very grammatical in language, but altogether free from the strong peculiarities of his elder compeer.

It was early one morning that Leonard and Mr. Mills were hard at work, and Mr. Bennet, the next eldest clerk—thinking it was rather too soon to begin—took his seat on the tall fender, and enlivened the party with a little agreeable conversation.

"So I understand that Mr. Thomason gave a grand ball last night," he began.

"Ah! he always does the thing in style," said Mr. Mills, with a terrible oath, that made Leonard drop his pen.

"There was a new beauty there, they tell me," said Mr. Bennet.

"Ah! what was her name?" asked Mr. Mills, with his head under the lid of his desk, searching for papers.

"Miss Reynolds, I think they said."

Leonard dropped his pen again.

"Perhaps they will make up a match between her and the musical gentleman," said Mr. Mills, with a sneer.

"Perhaps so," returned Mr. Bennet: "for they say she is a great heiress."

"Ah! if you can get a little money into the bargain, eh?" said Mr. Mills.

"To be sure! But I must be going now," said Mr. Bennet,' getting off the fender.

"Hullo! here comes the musical gentleman," said Mr. Mills, sticking his pen behind his ear.

A young man, very well dressed, with his hat on, and his walking-stick in the pocket of his coat, threw open the door and walked quietly in.

He was one of those very few persons that are worth regretting—most people being so entirely devoid of character that you never take the trouble to wish that they were better than they are. A physiognomist who saw Mr. Courtenay would think it worth while to regret that he had not more consideration for others—a less assured opinion of himself. He was what Carlyle calls a "reality." There was decision and firmness in every movement, penetration in every look, and a contempt for the world and its ways in the sarcastic tones of his voice. He looked like a Saxon: with very light hair and eyes, short, straight features, a stature much above the ordinary height, that was slight only because he was young, and that graceful outline of the head and bust which may sometimes be found in persons with old blood in their veins, but which it is hopeless to seek in the *parvenu*.

The clerks wished him good-morning; and Leonard, seeing a gentleman enter who seemed to belong to the concern, turned round and bowed slightly.

He paid not the smallest attention to these salutations; but sauntering up to the chimney-piece, with his hat still on, he took up one or two cards which lay there, held them close to his face to read them, and then laying them down, and turning with his back to the fire, said leisurely:

"Is my uncle here, Mr. Mills?"

"No, he is not."

The young man took up all the cards again, adjusted his hat, but did not take it off, and then began singing, in a low voice, the air of a popular opera. This habit had gained him the sobriquet of the

"musical gentleman" among the clerks in Mr. Thomason's establishment.

Leonard, who though he had not spent many years abroad, had caught all the courtesy of foreign manners—who never entered a shop without lifting his hat, nor sat next an artisan in a public conveyance without addressing to him some cheerful remark—was rather startled by the scornful indifference evinced by the nephew of the principal to the employés of the house. He felt keenly the want of courtesy in Mr. Courtenay's manner; especially as he could not get rid of the impression that his own descent was gentle, though adverse circumstances had placed him in a humble position: but he contented himself with thinking that Mr. Courtenay was not a philosopher, or he would be scrupulously civil to his inferiors, and he tried to consider that he was only encountering one of those checks that patient merit has been in the habit of taking, every now and then, for a good many centuries past.

"Would you write those letters to Hamburg this morning, Mr. Courtenay?" asked Mr. Mills, after a long silence on the part of the clerks, and three distinct airs from Mr. Courtenay, principally from the Opera of "Parisina."

Mr. Courtenay continued singing the latter part of the air *Ah tu sai ch' insieme*, took up a pen from Mr. Mills's desk, looked at it, drew towards him the sheet of paper which that gentleman proffered, dipped his pen, and turned to Mr. Mills.

"In German, eh?" he said, in a dry, quick tone.

"If you please, sir," returned Mr. Mills, with humility.

Mr. Courtenay, still standing, wrote rapidly about half a page in the German character, when a voice was heard outside the door, coupled with the shuffling and scratching noise of a large dog, trying to force its way into the room.

"All right!" said Mr. Courtenay, raising his head from his writing. "Here I am!"

The door burst open, and two young men entered, after having, with great difficulty, driven back an immense Newfoundland dog and shut him out.

They hurried up to Mr. Courtenay, who left his writing and stood talking in the middle of the room. These were two of his cousins; one of whom was quartered in the Tower, and the other a young man from College.

It was some time before either cousin could speak articulately, there was so much laughing to be got through at the idea that they were really, for the first time in their lives, standing in a merchant's office. They had not very clear ideas upon the subject; they thought they should have found their cousin selling something; but as Mr. Thomason's house was in connection with some great lead mines, and as lead is not unrolled on a counter and sold by the yard in this country, they were doomed to be disappointed. Mr.

Courtenay, as junior partner, disposed of the lead in a different manner.

"I was hard at work when you came in," he said, drily, as soon as the two cousins had come to an end of their remarks and laughter.

"No—were you? For Heaven's sake, do it again!" said the officer; "it would kill me to see you!"

"Pity to defer your martyrdom," said Mr. Courtenay, going back to the desk, and resuming his pen.

He wrote the remainder of his letter, the officer watching the process with great curiosity.

"I say, if you have no objection, I will let in that dog," said the collegian; "he seems to be rather uneasy in his mind."

"Pray do," said Mr. Courtenay.

The dog rushed in, and upset whatever he could upset in a moment—two wicker chairs, and a basket of waste paper. He then ran violently against the coal-scuttle, and having scattered its contents, the officer and the College gentleman agreed in the propriety of his being made to retire, and, with a kind recollection of his too susceptible feelings, they thought it advisable to withdraw also; but they had still so much to say to Mr. Courtenay that they dragged him between them—his letter still unsigned—into the yard that looked upon the Thames.

"There!" cried Mr. Mills, looking round and ascertaining that Mr. Courtenay was gone, "that is the musical gentleman; a nice man, isn't he? There's his letter left for signature, and only wanting half-an-hour to post time. I wonder who is to pick up the coals?"

Leonard wondered too, but he thought he had better offer his assistance. Fortunately the porter came in and saved him the trouble.

Mr. Mills turned to his desk, swore at the unsigned letter, then turned and swore at the porter, and finally, to make all comforable, swore at himself. At last he drew back the green curtain, and peeped at Leonard on the other side of the desk.

"I say, Mr. Warrenne!"

"Well?" said Leonard, smiling at the wrinkled visage presented so suddenly to his view.

"I wish you would step into the yard and see if that Mr. Courtenay is coming back to sign his letter" (another oath).

"I will go and ask him, if you like it," said Leonard, laying down his pen.

It was not a pleasant task to have to address a young man who could not treat him with common civility; but Leonard was a philosopher. He walked into the yard where all three gentlemen were playing noisily with the Newfoundland dog. It was rather difficult to arrest his attention; however, he walked up close to the group, and said, in a distinct voice:

"Mr. Courtenay?"

"Eh!" said Mr. Courtenay, turning suddenly round.

Leonard gave his message.

"Oh, that will do," said Mr. Courtenay, turning away to play with the dog again.

Leonard stood undecided; he had asked a question, and he did not clearly see that he had received an answer; but Mr. Courtenay did not appear to observe that he was waiting.

"I say—about Chiswick," said the military cousin.

"Do you go?" asked Mr. Courtenay.

"Yes; Lady Jane has secured him," said the College cousin, with a laugh.

"Lady Jane has a very pretty girl staying with her, though," said the military cousin by way of excuse.

"My dear fellow, there is no reason why you should not be sometimes civil to the woman, though she is your aunt," said Mr. Courtenay drily.

Both the cousins laughed very much at this remark, and the military cousin took up a piece of stick and threw it into the river; the dog plunged after it, and then the party had to scramble down into a barge to get the animal back again.

Leonard finding it in vain to wait, went back to Mr. Mills. That gentleman was exceedingly indignant when he related what had taken place. He went on grumbling until Mr. Courtenay returned, and then he said, in the crossest tone that he dared to use, that he did not imagine those letters would be in time for the post to-night; but he supposed it did not signify.

"Quite in time," said Mr. Courtenay, affixing his name to the letter, and writing off the other almost as he spoke. "Mr. Cooke had better take them immediately."

He turned his head slightly towards Leonard as he spoke, and folded and sealed without delay.

Mr. Cooke had been the name of Leonard's predecessor; and it was one proof, among many, of the slight consideration in which he held his inferiors, that Mr. Courtenay could never recollect or apply their names properly. He did not seem to think such people had any business with a name; and it was one of his conditions with his grooms that they should each in succession submit to be called "Bob"—that having been the name of his first groom.

"Mr. Warrenne, sir, is engaged in particular business," said Mr. Mills, shortly.

"Eh? he had better go, I think," said Mr. Courtenay, very quietly, but in a tone that seemed to leave no opening for dispute.

"There, then, Mr. Warrenne," said Mr. Mills, sullenly, putting the letters in his hand, "if they are too late they will be of no use, and that is some comfort."

Mr. Courtenay did not condescend to hear this observation; he took up his stick, adjusted his hat, and went out, fastening his gloves to the tune of the last new polka.

CHAPTER VI.

A BLOTTED LETTER.

THE only amusement, and almost the only occupation, that Leonard enjoyed, out of his daily business, was that of writing home. When he returned from the office he was too tired, both in body and mind, to exert himself; he seldom cared to draw or to study, and he generally spent his evenings on the sofa with a French or German novel in his hand, unless he had a letter to begin or to finish to Maud.

In these letters it may be supposed that Mr. Courtenay, with his ungracious manners, was not spared. Leonard, in common with many people who have a morbid touch of melancholy in their composition, had a keen sense of the ridiculous, and a considerable fund of humour; and Maud, though highly indignant, often laughed heartily at his pictures of Mr. Courtenay and the other clerks. Leonard had plenty of time to make himself familiar with the original of his portrait. Mr. Courtenay, who had been absent abroad during the first few weeks of his servitude, now came to the office almost every day, overlooked the clerks, worked or not, as his humour dictated, despatched everything he undertook with an ease that was perfectly surprising, and regularly called Leonard "Mr. Cooke." Whenever he did this, Mr. Mills seized the first opportunity of his absence to take an angry pinch of snuff, and to say in his bitterest manner:

"Almost time, I think, that he found out your name, Mr. Warrenne."

Leonard merely laughed; he had been galled at first by Mr. Courtenay's contempt, but he now began to see it in a ludicrous point of view, and it rather served to divert him. Still he daily bowed when Mr. Courtenay entered, and as regularly his courtesy was disregarded; but he persevered because he thought it proper to do so—just as a sailor bows to the quarter-deck, though he never expects it to return his salutation.

Meanwhile, he learned a few particulars respecting Mr. Courtenay and his family from Mr. Mills, who seemed to know all the concerns, both public and private, of Mr. Thomason, and every one of his relations.

Mr. Courtenay was the son of a gentleman of large landed property in the West of England, which he had involved, through the most unprincipled extravagance, so deeply as to render its value almost nominal. The eldest son had followed closely in the father's footsteps, and everything was going very nicely to the dogs, when

Mr. Thomason, having no son of his own, offered to take his younger nephew into partnership—he was shrewd enough to see that nothing could be done for the elder one. That hopeful gentleman, however, provided for himself, a few months after his brother had accepted Mr. Thomason's magnificent offer, by a severe fall in a steeple-chase, which so far deranged his intellects as to make it needful to place him under restraint. This melancholy condition lasted for a time, and then the injury he had received developed itself in a more decided manner, and at length carried him off. The father, grown older and sobered by the death of his favourite son, no longer indulged in reckless extravagance; and Mr. Courtenay, ever since he had been in Mr. Thomason's house, had devoted a large part of his liberal income to paying off the encumbrances on his father's property, which now, Mr. Mills believed, was in a fair way to be altogether cleared, so that he did not see at all why there should be no talk of a marriage between Mr. Courtenay and his cousin, Miss Thomason. She was a great match, so was Mr. Courtenay; and Mr. Mills (or his informant) was inclined to think there was a great neglect of duty somewhere that these two fortunes were not brought together. Who was Mr. Mills's informant Leonard never did or could discover.

Leonard saw no more of the College cousin, but the military cousin, being quartered in the Tower, which was very near, frequently stepped in to waste Mr. Courtenay's time, or to entice him to some party of pleasure.

It was a habit of Mr. Courtenay's when any friends came to see him, to talk to them quite as unreservedly before his clerks as if he had received them in a private room. This might, perhaps, arise from an idea that that class of people are unprovided with ears, or probably from a notion that they could not understand his topics of conversation. Now Leonard had always felt a very strong and foolish desire to enter the army; he was well aware that his father's means rendered this impossible, but he was not the less interested in everything connected with the service. The visits of the military cousin were always an agreeable variety for him; for then he heard all the gossip about the cousin's regiment, all the scrapes and difficulties and tricks about money matters, all the sporting transactions, all the lamps and windows that they broke, or wished to break, and all the promotions and exchanges.

Leonard had sense and integrity enough to perceive that the cousin, in common with a good many of his associates, was a happy mixture of the knave and fool; but still he was an officer, and when, for mysterious reasons, he appeared in that phase of costume called undress, he thought him more than commonly amusing. It sometimes staggered the reverence he naturally felt inclined to pay to so brilliant a member of society, to observe that Mr. Courtenay's disdain for the clerks was *nothing* compared to the abrupt contempt

he evinced continually for his cousin and his companions in arms. He looked down upon them so excessively and so very openly, that Leonard wondered how they could at all submit to his society.

One morning the military cousin happened to be in the office waiting for Mr. Courtenay, who was signing some papers, and pulling about everything that came under his fingers in a way that is common to the sex, but which is carried to perfection by officers. When he had demolished four pens and three sheets of blotting-paper, and made a little pool of ink on Mr. Mills's desk, Mr. Courtenay turned mildly to him and said :

"I almost think you had better put your hands in your pockets."

"Well then, when will you have done?' asked the cousin, yawning.

"Impossible to say exactly; when you are in the way, you always contrive to disturb one. The other letter, Mr. Mills."

Mr. Mills reached the letter for Mr. Courtenay to sign, and laid it down in the little pool of ink before mentioned.

"Some of your handiwork," said Mr. Courtenay to his cousin, as he lifted up the blotted sheet; "here, Mr. Mills, let Mr. Cooke make a copy of this paper immediately. It cannot go in that state!"

"Mr. Warrenne has to go through these accounts of Simson's people before two o'clock, sir," replied Mr. Mills.

Mr. Courtenay replied only by a slight nod of the head, which seemed to confirm his order. Leonard took the paper from Mr. Mills, and began transcribing it with all the composure of a philosopher. The cousin stared stupidly on, as if he had a vague idea that he had done some mischief, and was determined not to be ashamed of it. Mr. Mills uttered a low grumbling noise, which he did not venture to put into words.

"I say," remarked the cousin, while Mr. Courtenay was waiting for the letter, "I want you to come down the river with me, as soon as you have finished that stupid stuff."

"With pleasure," returned Mr. Courtenay, "if you will have the goodness to keep your friend Taylor out of my way."

"Taylor!" exclaimed the cousin. "The best fellow in the world!"

"The very best—but he does not quite suit me. I really cannot undertake to laugh at his bad jokes, and he is never quiet. Ten minutes of Taylor would knock me up for the day."

"Well, I will get him to take an oar, and then he will not be so noisy."

"Thank you very much. Is young Osborne still in town?"

"I believe so; I saw him the other day."

"Then get him; he amuses me."

"I am sure he is noisy enough," said the cousin.

"Yes, my dear friend; but there are so many different kinds of noise," remarked Mr. Courtenay, drily.

"I say, did you dance with Florence Reynolds the other night?" asked the cousin.

"I? No. I asked her, but she was engaged."

"What do you think of her?"

"A beautiful creature—but an arrant flirt."

"Oh, that does not matter; I like her the better for that."

"How deep a consolation it would be to her," remarked Mr. Courtenay, mildly, "if she did but know your opinion!"

"O'Neill is wild about her," said the cousin.

"Yes; I thought he seemed struck," said Mr. Courtenay. "He danced with her half the evening."

"He is what some people call a fine man!" said the cousin, angrily.

"Yes, there is plenty of him," returned Mr. Courtenay, drily.

This retort had the effect of soothing the ruffled plumes of the cousin.

"Did you know," asked the cousin, "that O'Neill was one of the five?"

"The five!" repeated Mr. Courtenay; "I don't quite understand you. Some technical term, I daresay; you soldiers are so clever!"

"Not at all," remarked the cousin, with much truth; "I mean that he is one of the five who have laid a bet that they will marry Miss Reynolds—five hundred to be paid to the winner on the wedding-day."

Leonard found it very difficult to keep silence, for anything more degrading than this arrangement, more opposed to the spirit of a gentleman—or even a man—could hardly be conceived. And though he had often repeated to himself that Miss Reynolds had by her own conduct put an end to the interest he should always have cherished for her, yet he never heard her name without a quicker beating of the heart. And he had not even the satisfaction of seeing the tranquil glance of contempt with which Mr. Courtenay surveyed his cousin from head to foot.

"And are you one of this respectable party?" asked Mr. Courtenay.

"No, but Taylor is; it was Le Grange who set it going."

"And the others?" said Mr. Courtenay, with increasing contempt. "Let us have the names of the whole gang."

"Roxby and the Count de Merville," replied the cousin; "but you don't seem to like it. I believe you want to be one yourself. Is not it a capital idea?"

"It is very military," returned Mr. Courtenay, quietly.

"How do you mean?" asked the puzzled cousin.

"Anything but civil—that is all, my dear friend," returned Mr. Courtenay, receiving the letter from Mr. Mills, which Leonard had just finished copying.

"And O'Neill did not tell you?" said the cousin; "I thought he told you everything."

"Not quite everything," replied Mr. Courtenay; "there are a few subjects on which he knows that we should differ."

"Mrs. Ashton, for instance," said the cousin, laughing.

"Exactly," replied Courtenay.

"Did he tell you?" asked the cousin.

"Tell me what?" returned Courtenay.

"That she was dead."

"I am glad of it!" said Courtenay, in his briefest tone.

"Why?" asked the cousin.

"Bah! Do you think I can explain to *you?*" said Courtenay, impatiently.

"If you are glad," said the cousin, "it is more than he was. I never saw a fellow so cut up in my life."

"Cut up! What did he do it for?" said Courtenay, sharply. "If there is one thing more pitiful than another, it is remorse."

"But you are such a fellow," said the cousin, in an apologetic tone; "you must not expect every one to be such a Potiphar as yourself."

Mr. Courtenay looked at his cousin very earnestly for a few moments, in the hope of extracting some meaning from his last remark. He likewise tried to remember in what single particular his character or conduct resembled that of Pharaoh's chief captain; but finding it to be a vain attempt, he said, quietly, "I am at your service now, if you have a mind to go up the river this morning."

As soon as the door closed upon the cousins, Mr. Mills relieved his feelings in the usual way. With many oaths he declared that he would give warning—he would resign; *he* who had been upwards of forty years in the house! The partners would be very sorry for it afterwards; but he could not, and he would not, do his work if every jackanapes were allowed to come into the office and chatter while he was making his calculations.

Leonard turned aside his anger by a jest, and applied himself to his own business, which, to say the truth, the name of Miss Reynolds had always power to interrupt, and which had been, moreover, thrown back by the awkwardness of the military cousin. He had one comfort, however—he knew her enemies; he might, perhaps, one day, though she despised his aid, be really of use to her. He might yet be able to step in between her and her mercenary and fraudulent adversaries. How gladly would he have called out the whole five! But he knew that, in his situation, he might call; they would not be likely to come when "he did call for them!"

He was not able to go out to dinner, owing to the time lost in copying the blotted letter; but for this *contretemps* (which, by the way, happened often enough, from one slight cause or another), he forgave Mr. Courtenay with all his heart. "I declare," he thought, "I half like the proud fellow; he despises those five rascals as much as I do myself!"

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE FERNS.

Maud's letters soon confirmed the news which Leonard had heard at the office, respecting Miss Reynolds' stay in town. A young lady who had been her schoolfellow was about to be married, and the mother had invited Florence to spend a few weeks with her daughter previous to the ceremony. It was an opportunity for extending her conquests that she was not likely to neglect. She detested the comparative solitude of Erlsmede, which she bore without complaining, only because she anticipated the time, at no distant period, when her father would return and place her at the head of a brilliant establishment, as a preliminary to her moving off into a still more brilliant establishment of her own.

The five honourable gentlemen mentioned by the military cousin were always in her train; for that sort of people seem to scent an heiress with all the hungry keenness of a jackal; and she might have reasonably flattered herself that they would, any one of them, have offered to her at a moment's notice. But, with one exception, they met with little encouragement to be so bold.

Mr. Taylor was a noisy, hearty, jocose man, whom she specially abhorred; the Count de Merville she had known before, and after a very close siege to his heart, had confessed to herself that his only object was her fortune. Mr. Roxby was a keen sportsman, who could hardly feign an interest in any living creature except his horse; and Captain Le Grange was a pale, haggard-looking gamester, who scarcely made it a secret that he lived by his wits. But Captain O'Neill, with the gallantry of manner common to the Irish, aided by a fine person, and that unmeaning arrogance of deportment often seen in his profession, contrived to impress Florence more favourably than his accomplices. And he possessed this great advantage over the other suitors, that he was, from the first moment of seeing Florence, thoroughly in earnest. For her grace and beauty and the soft fascination of her manner, had converted, what was begun as a capital speculation, into a sudden and passionate attachment. And Fate could prepare no fitter retribution for this unprincipled knave than to throw in his way such a woman as Miss Reynolds, who inspired him with his first respectable attachment, at the same time that her splendid expectations held out to him the soothing prospect of relief from the dishonest embarrassment of his numerous debts.

Florence was extremely vain of this triumph; for he was a man of the world, and a bad subject, and therefore the last person likely to be thoroughly enslaved.

But much as Florence enjoyed her absence from the sober village of Erlsmede, perhaps Maud Warrenne enjoyed it still more. Her intercourse with Mrs. Creswick was now perfectly unrestrained; she

could go to the house without the chance of encountering Miss Reynolds, and being chilled by her cold inquiries. Mrs. Creswick was one of those very rare characters who at once divest every one of all external circumstances, and judge them simply by the qualities they may chance to possess. Civil to all her acquaintances, she never gave her confidence or her affection to any one whom she had not reason to believe actuated by strong principle and kind feeling. Careless even of high birth, where it was not accompanied by noble qualities, she was still more inexorable to the accident of wealth. She never could be made to comprehend why persons who had grown rich by the humblest pursuits should be welcomed into society, unless they were distinguished by their talents or their benevolence. The little Colonel, who was quite beside himself at the sight of a lord, and who doted on everybody who kept a large establishment, although he never dared to oppose "Dearest madam" directly in any of her views, yet contrived to have a much more extended and motley visiting list at the Ferns than if its direction had been left solely in her hands.

The unremitting attention of Maud to her sister Alice first attracted Mrs. Creswick to her character. She knew that it must be at the expense of some effort, and some self-denial, that she regularly and patiently, day by day, instructed Alice in languages, in history, and the more simple and useful branches of female education, so that Alice, though blind, knew more history than most girls, could speak French and German, and understand them when read, and was a very fair arithmetician. For music, in which she excelled remarkably, Mr. Warrenne had afforded her the instruction of a master from a cathedral town not far off. Unfortunately, Mrs. Creswick, so sensitive to the performance of any duty, had frequently pointed out to Florence the conduct of Maud Warrenne as worthy of imitation, and laboured, but in vain, to impress upon her the deep responsibility of every human life.

Florence merely replied, in her sweetest tone, that as she had not a pretty little blind sister to patronise, she hardly saw how she could walk exactly in the footsteps of Miss Warrenne, and that she trusted her dear aunt did not desire the imitation to extend to minor affairs, as she had always rather preferred her own style of dress to that of the young lady in question.

Mrs. Creswick happened to join to great enthusiasm of feeling a remarkable quantity of plain sense in acting, a union so rare as to be hardly ever found, and so fortunate as to command success in most instances. She saw immediately that she had made a mistake in praising Maud, and another mistake in supposing her niece at the present time capable of improvement. She knew that sometimes it is good to wait, and so, however fit the occasion, however urgent the need seemed, she resolutely abstained from saying a word more to Florence.

It was drawing near to the first of September. Colonel Creswick always filled his house for that important day; and Florence's unwilling return was in some measure soothed by the knowledge that Captain O'Neill was to accompany his friend, Mr. Courtenay, to the Ferns, on a visit of a week or ten days.

The day of their arrival—they were expected to dinner—she made as costly a toilet as if she were going out to a large party. Among her many accomplishments she knew exactly when a man values dress, and in what degree. She knew that Captain O'Neill was guilty of the vulgarism of delighting in fine clothes, to a degree seldom seen except among men brought up in a mercer's shop, and as he was her present object, she sacrificed her own knowledge on the matter to his taste.

Mrs. Creswick felt rather astonished when her niece swam into the room, wearing a costly black lace tunic, over a pink satin dress, a splendid Indian fan hanging from her arm, a gold pomander-box swinging at her side, and jewelry in great abundance wherever it could be worn. She made no observation, however, being aware, from frequent experience, that it would have no effect, but turned her silent, searching eyes upon her gaudy decorations. Florence, however, was secure in such a dazzling purity of complexion that no possible mixture of colour could disturb its exquisite tints. Her beauty was less faultless, but more theatrical only in its effect, than if she had been dressed with more taste and simplicity.

Colonel Creswick, advancing sideways towards her, said that he saw his fair niece was armed for conquest that evening, and she would be, as usual, irresistible. Florence, looking up from her low seat, was in the act of making some pleased rejoinder, when the guests entered.

Captain O'Neill was at her side directly, whispering compliments and protestations, and other fragments, in the most impassioned manner. It is surprising how eloquent love makes a man; and when he is deeply in debt into the bargain, he is never at a loss for something to say to an heiress.

"You have not been introduced to my niece, Mr. Courtenay, I think," said Mrs. Creswick.

"No; I believe I have not yet had that honour," said Mr. Courtenay, carelessly. "But I had the pleasure of meeting her once at Mrs. Thomason's."

"Let me present you," said Mrs. Creswick; and the ceremony was performed—Florence bowing slightly, without interrupting her conversation with Captain O'Neill. Mr. Courtenay turned away without again regarding her, and began to talk to the Colonel about shooting. Florence lent a still more attentive ear to the platitudes of her companion; but the indifference of Mr. Courtenay occupied all her thoughts. Not even to look at her—to stand absorbed by the Colonel's history of his wonderful pointer, Diana, and then to fall into

conversation with her aunt, drawing the corner of his chair forward so that he almost turned his back upon Florence. She was not used to it! Captain O'Neill's London anecdotes and his fine protestations could not make amends for this. Her finery seemed to her suddenly out of place, too. There was something in the stern calmness of Mr. Courtenay's air, that looked as if he would so thoroughly despise the glittering pretensions of her toilette. And though a more practised judge of character might detect just a little touch of foppery in the rigid plainness of his own attire, she felt at a glance how superior was the one extreme to the other.

"We have not met, Mr. Courtenay, since you first joined your uncle," said Mrs. Creswick; "you remember the time, I daresay."

"I do—six years ago; it was at the house of Sir George Manning, the father of Sir Frederick. That was an era I shall not easily forget."

"I daresay not. Are you at all interested in your employment?"

"Why, I had rather be following the hounds, as far as my taste goes; but that would not exactly answer my purpose."

"You would not be a mere sportsman, Mr. Courtenay?"

"Why, no. A man with a single idea must always be a distressing spectacle; a mere lawyer, or a mere philosopher, is quite as great a bore to his friends as a mere sportsman, Mrs. Creswick."

"You are not changed, I find," said Mrs. Creswick, smiling.

"No; do people change? That is a phenomenon I have never yet witnessed; but, then, I have never yet happened to take any man for more than he is worth."

"Have you been equally successful with horses?" asked Colonel Creswick, as dinner was announced.

"Not invariably," said Mr. Courtenay, laughing, and giving Mrs. Creswick his arm; "tradition does say that I was once grievously taken in."

"You must tell me something about Ada Thomason," said Mrs. Creswick, as they took their places at table; "she was such a pretty child."

"Was she? When first I knew her she was cutting her teeth wrong, and looked very shabby; but she has grown up better than I expected; in fact, she is rather handsome now."

"Who is handsome?" asked Captain O'Neill, rousing himself at the word.

"Can't you mind your own business?" said Mr. Courtenay. "I was speaking of Ada Thomason."

"Oh! Very handsome—in a certain style, that is to say," said Captain O'Neill, turning to Florence.

"Handsome and rich—two great trials," remarked Mrs. Creswick.

"And very well she bears them," said Courtenay; "except that they make her very indolent, I don't know that they do her any harm."

"She is a favourite of yours, Mr. Courtenay?"

"Reasonably; we are sworn friends. You need not look me through, as if I had a wedding-ring in my waistcoat pocket."

"How very like!" said Mrs. Creswick, musing.

"Like myself, I hope; pray allow me to be incomparable; it is the only simile that I covet."

"Yes, I was going to say, like what you were. Thank you, I shall gladly resign the chickens into your hands."

While Mr. Courtenay was carving, Florence tried to attract his attention by making some whimsical demands upon his services for her poodle. He sent her what she wanted, scarcely replied to her smiling apologies, and then renewed his conversation with Mrs. Creswick. The dinner passed. Captain O'Neill devoted to Florence: Mr. Courtenay, as before, calm, indifferent, amusing; seeming, as much as it was possible for a man at all used to good breeding, to forget the very presence of Miss Reynolds.

She rose from the table thoroughly vexed. It was very well to have Captain O'Neill at her feet, but that was no reason why she should not make Mr. Courtenay miserable. Besides, the delight of having two men in the house furiously jealous of each other; which pleasure she must forego if he went on in that negligent manner.

His cool way of asking her, at dessert, if she liked candied apricots was too much; and then turning to Mrs. Creswick, almost before he had heard her reply, to remark that he feared Madame Laffarge would send preserved apricots out of fashion. And then her aunt, taking up the conversation in her wise way, and lamenting the publicity that is now afforded to every detail in the life of a great criminal: so like her! So pedantic! And Florence sank back in an armchair the moment she reached the drawing-room, too sullen to speak, read, or work.

The arrival of the gentlemen was a relief, both to the aunt and niece; tea and coffee occupied a certain time, and then Captain O'Neill and Florence sat down to a game of chess.

"I declare, I'm half afraid!" said Florence, looking prettily from Captain O'Neill to Mr. Courtenay. "Is he a very good player?"

"A very bold player, Miss Reynolds—so take care of yourself," replied Mr. Courtenay, drily, as he crossed to Mrs. Creswick.

"Does not that fine work try your eyes horribly?" he asked, looking down upon some beautiful bead-work on which she was employed.

"No; I have an excellent sight, for which I am very thankful," replied Mrs. Creswick. "You know, I conclude, the contents of your father's letter?" she added.

"Perfectly. Poor man, since my brother's death he has been occupied by that one idea—to get me married. You can't think how

much I was obliged to him for sending me here; it was exactly the place I wished to visit."

"And which of us may appropriate that compliment?" said Mrs. Creswick, smiling.

"Nay," said Mr. Courtenay, dropping the sarcastic tone that was too familiar to him, "you know I am always pleased to find myself in your society, but I will confess to you that another motive brought me here at this time. You were my mother's friend—be mine! I have reason to believe that there is a young lady in this neighbourhood whom I greatly desire to meet."

"And her name?" said Mrs. Creswick, smiling at the abruptness with which he plunged into his subject.

"That I do not know," he replied.

"My dear Mr. Courtenay, I would do the impossible to oblige you, but really—a nameless beauty!"

"There cannot be the least difficulty in finding her out," said Mr. Courtenay, in his quick, firm manner; "she has, or had, a blind sister."

"Maud Warrenne, then, I declare!" exclaimed Mrs. Creswick, who had entered with all the zeal of a young girl into the strange confidence Mr. Courtenay was reposing in her.

"Maud Warrenne! I like the name very much," said Mr. Courtenay, coolly; "yes, I'm quite satisfied with her name."

"And what is your object, Mr. Courtenay?"

"To marry her, if she has no particular objection."

"You are, then, acquainted with her?"

"Not in the least!"

"You have met her somewhere?"

"Once—on the King's Highway."

"Do you know who she is?"

"Not at all; but I think I know what she is."

"She is the daughter of our medical man."

"Is she? That is a matter of perfect indifference to me."

"Mr. Courtenay is coming out in a new character," said Mrs. Creswick, smiling, "that of a perfect hero of romance."

"My dear Mrs. Creswick, don't be deceived by appearances," said Mr. Courtenay, drily; "I leave romance and its consequences to my friend O'Neill."

"Eh?" said that gentleman, looking round at the mention of his own name.

"I said you were occasionally in the habit of acting little romances, my dear friend," said Mr. Courtenay.

"He means 'proverbs,'" said Captain O'Neill, turning with a puzzled look at Florence; "but I declare to you I have not acted in one for a year or more."

"Oh! never mind what he said, Captain O'Neill," returned Florence, shrugging her shoulders; "nothing, I am sure, worth

interrupting our game to listen to—that castle of yours looks so tempting!"

"She is piqued, and I could have her," thought Mr. Courtenay, watching the angry gesture of Florence; "but, thank Heaven, I have something a little better than that in prospect!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A MORNING CALL.

MAUD was very busy among her flowers the next morning, with Karl following to pick up litters in his barrow, and Alice seated within talking distance in the arbour, making a net for the fruit trees, while Ondine flew from one to the other, sometimes thrusting her cold nose into Karl's rough hand, and sometimes springing perversely upon the very flowers that Maud was tying up, when Mrs. Creswick stepped out of her grounds, and crossing over to the green gate at the bottom of the Warrennes' garden, looked over, and called to the girls:

"Who will be so kind as to let me in?" said she.

Maud flew to the gate.

Certainly, if at any time she did look more charming than another, it was when gardening, in her broad-leafed straw hat, with her high pink morning dress, and little white collar. The fresh and intelligent simplicity of her countenance, and the animation of her gestures, seemed so completely in character with her rustic occupation; and, from living so much alone, neither sister had the manners or phrases current in society, which will be accounted shocking or charming, according as people love or hate, admire or despise, what is commonly called the world.

"Mrs. Creswick is quite *matinale*," said Maud, opening wide the green gate for her friend, with a little mocking courtesy.

"Because Mrs. Creswick is come on business," said that lady, stepping cheerfully in.

"With papa?"

"No; with you. I wish you to come and drink tea with me this evening."

Maud hesitated. "If you were quite alone, my dear Mrs. Creswick; but I think that now your house is full of company."

"And do you know, that is the very reason I have asked you?" returned Mrs. Creswick. "You are, I think, my dear Maud, eighteen this very month, and up to this time you have seen actually no society."

"You know we keep no company," said Maud.

"Yes, my dear, with that arrangement I have nothing to do; but I should like to show you a little company notwithstanding; for I have observed that people who live very secluded form altogether a wrong estimate of society. You must see by experience of what

very coarse materials the world is made, before you will actually believe it; and then you will learn to value properly the few exceptions you find, and to treat with proper indifference those slights which sensitive people are apt to magnify."

"I am sure I feel your kindness," said Maud. "I can leave Alice very well for a single evening."

"But, remember, if Alice will come, I shall be delighted to see her," said Mrs. Creswick.

"Oh! not me, please, Mrs. Creswick," said Alice. "I should feel so uncomfortable in a strange room."

"Well, I shall leave it open," said Mrs. Creswick; Alice has plenty of time before her; but I shall expect you, recollect, at eight o'clock."

As Alice was quite immovable on the subject—indeed, she almost came to tears when her father urged her to make the effort—Maud was obliged to go alone to the Ferns.

A sense of shyness made her rather later than the time appointed by Mrs. Creswick, and when she arrived, she found herself turned alone into a room full of ladies and gentlemen.

Mrs. Creswick was seated at the farther end of the room, listening to Mr. Courtenay, with her usual earnest and breathless expression.

It was not very easy to thread her way through the groups that were scattered between her and the lady of the house; but Maud's shyness was not of that sort which implies any loss of self-possession. It was, rather, a reluctance to mix with people who she felt would look down upon her. Her apprehensions would have been much diminished had she known beforehand that people would have disregarded her as absolutely as if she had been invisible. She was not in their set; they were not supposed to be aware of her presence. It was therefore less easy to get to Mrs. Creswick than if they had known she was in the room, and had made way for her.

But Mr. Courtenay, after watching her efforts for a few moments, said something to Mrs. Creswick, who rose at once, and came towards her with quick, noiseless step.

Miss Reynolds, in a beautiful evening dress of pink crape, was seated in a low chair playing with her dog, and talking to Captain O'Neill, who was seated beside her. She found out by this time that Maud was in the room, and having stared at her for a minute, made her a slight bow, and turned to her companion.

"Do you think her pretty, Captain O'Neill?"

"Why, it may be my want of taste," said he, with perfect gravity, "but it occurs to me that she is much too thin."

"Oh, you are so fastidious!" returned Florence, looking up to him with a laugh; "but I assure you I have heard her called pretty by several people in the neighbourhood."

"Indeed! that must have been by those who had never seen you," he said.

"Oh, fie!" returned Florence.

"You will sing now, won't you?" he asked.

"Oh, if you wish it; but my singing is not worth hearing," she replied, with much diffidence of manner.

Captain O'Neill replied by a glance of intense admiration. He was very skilful in looks, and they were altogether a safer medium for him than words, as he had not yet acquired an accurate knowledge of the English language, which he managed to eke out with sundry scraps of French, picked up while hanging about Paris for a few weeks at a time.

Maud, who had been edified by their remarks on her person, for they had not found it necessary to control their voices in speaking of her, now addressed a sentence apiece to the two young ladies nearest to her, which was returned by a brief and chilling monosyllable. Mrs. Creswick was obliged to attend to her other guests, and after having introduced Maud to the two young ladies before mentioned, she imagined that they would afford her a share of their conversation, instead of which they huddled together, laughing and whispering, occasionally favouring Maud with a broad stare. Those people who think this could not occur in society have never happened to be thrown into company with young women who consider some other young woman decidedly their inferior.

Meantime, Florence allowed Captain O'Neill to lead her to the piano, and entrusted to him her bouquet and embroidered handkerchief, while she scrambled over the keys. She had a sweet voice, but so imperfect an ear that she could not sing anything in tune; and any one less conceited than herself would never have ventured to perform in company. Maud noticed, with some amusement, that she seemed by no means contented with the assiduous homage of Captain O'Neill, but suffered her eyes to wander with a restless expression towards Mr. Courtenay, who stood leaning on the corner of the chimney-piece, surveying the company with a calm and ironical glance. Maud perceived a slight smile pass over his face as Miss Reynolds brought to a conclusion one of her elaborate flourishes—a smile that seemed to be expressive rather of contempt than of gratification for the performance.

"Is your friend musical, Captain O'Neill?" asked Florence, directing her eyes again to Mr. Courtenay as soon as she had finished her song.

"I hardly know what he is fond of; he cares for nothing I think—I never saw such a fellow," said Captain O'Neill, laughing.

"How different from you!" said Florence, looking up in his face with her winning expression. "You are so enthusiastic!"

This, being as far as possible from the truth, was very gratifying to Captain O'Neill's feelings. He smiled and plumed himself, and allowed that in that respect he was very different from his friend. For any one might see by his countenance that he was violent and

irrational; but enthusiasm is kindled out of altogether a finer kind of clay than that in which he was moulded.

Florence, once at the piano, was not easily dislodged. After the song she favoured the company with a waltz, and after that, divers other dance-music, to all which Captain O'Neill listened with great delight, leaning over and whispering the greater part of the time. Mr. Courtenay, still leaning on the chimney-piece, continued to survey the company with that keen glance from which there is no escape.

Mrs. Creswick passed close to him.

"I wish you would sit down, Mrs. Creswick; you are tired," he said; "the Colonel is surely civil enough for two. Do rest a little!"

"You see what I have done in bringing her here," said Mrs. Creswick, glancing towards Maud, who was looking over a book of engravings alone. "I cannot alter it. Florence sets the fashion among the young people. If she were more gracious, they would follow her example."

"A vulgar set, evidently," said the young man, sending round a quiet glance of contempt; "she must find it disagreeable to mix with them, I should think! What would they have, in Heaven's name? Is not her descent good enough? One would think in these days people's veins ought to run gold, instead of the blue blood of the old Spaniards. But I am going to make her acquaintance."

"I have been admiring your forbearance," said Mrs. Creswick; "you have not yet addressed a word to her."

"I have been watching her instead," returned Mr. Courtenay. "I never saw anything so elegant; and I am excessively glad to see, by the carriage of her head, that she is very proud."

"Pray let me hear you retract that opinion before you go," said Mrs. Creswick.

"I am quite sorry I cannot oblige you, but it is my pet failing," he replied, crossing the room as he spoke.

He drew a chair close to Maud, and said, by way of beginning the conversation, in a dry, quiet tone: "You live just over the way, don't you?"

"Yes," said Maud, looking up from her book, rather surprised by this time that any one could address a word to her, except Mrs. Creswick, without feeling degraded by the effort.

"Will you sing presently?" he asked.

"I never sing."

"Is that quite literal?"

"Quite, as regards society."

"Come, you sing at home; that is a concession."

Maud smiled a little, and her eyes sparkled; she was amused by his manner.

"You think nobody here worth singing to: that is the fact."

"Mrs. Creswick is worth singing to," said Maud; "but she can hear me when we are alone."

"Now," said he, clasping his hands slowly together, and leaning them upon her book of engravings, "do you recollect me?"

Maud lifted her long eyelashes, and looked at him for a moment; then she smiled, her colour deepened, she hesitated, and said:

"I—I remember somebody very like you; but it was a long time ago."

"And a restive horse, eh?" said he, quickly.

"Yes," returned Maud; "how frightened we were!"

"You, and your sister, was it not?" he added, rapidly.

"Yes."

"But you were as bold as a lion, you know; it was your sister who was timid!"

"Oh! you don't know how you frightened us both," said Maud, smiling; "I have hardly got over it yet."

"Pray, did you recognise my accomplice on that occasion?" said Courtenay, nodding towards Captain O'Neill.

Maud turned round and looked indifferently at him. "No," she said; "was he of the party?"

"To be sure! Come, I'm glad that you remembered me!"

"Not till you reminded me of it," said Maud.

"Oh, by-the-way, just introduce me, Mrs. Creswick," said he, as that lady passed.

"Mr. Courtenay—Miss Warrenne."

Maud closed her beautiful lips with a total change of expression. She saw before her the Courtenay of Leonard's letters.

But he was not to be deterred in the slightest degree by her coldness—he cared little which way it was; he "never said, fail!"

"Do you admire Miss Reynolds' singing?" he asked, by way of keeping up the conversation.

"Not so much," replied Maud, quietly, "as many other things that she does."

"Perhaps you will enlighten me on the subject of her accomplishments," he said. "I have been two days in the house without finding them out."

"She dances beautifully, and paints flowers very well," replied Maud.

"From Nature?"

"Yes."

"That is something; do you also draw from Nature?"

"Yes; but landscapes, not flowers."

"And how is your sister?"

"Quite well, thank you," said Maud, with increasing coldness.

"She is still blind?" he asked.

"Still."

"Dear me; that is a pity."

"You think so?"

"And do not you?"

"Perhaps I think it something more than a pity," said Maud.

"Ah; I am not in the habit of using strong expressions."

"I can readily believe it."

"And why again?"

"Because warm expressions are generally the result of warm feelings."

Now it is a common thing for people to abuse themselves, and then to be very angry that you take them at their word. Courtenay looked piqued, and said with a slight cough:

"Ladies seldom give a man credit for feeling, unless he can rant like a player!"

"So that, once in a hundred times, ladies commit an injustice," returned Maud.

"Then you admit that the thing can happen as an exception?" said Courtenay.

"Yes, when a man stammers," returned Maud.

He smiled, and regarded her earnestly, but Maud was too proud to feel embarrassed, even at the piercing glance of Mr. Courtenay; for few things make a person so proud as the feeling that society has assigned to them a wrong position.

Florence was at this moment passing from the piano close to them. Mr. Courtenay turned round and said drily:

"Thank you very much, Miss Reynolds."

"Oh, it is no pleasure to play to you," returned Florence; "you never praise one!"

"Perhaps, then, you will induce Miss Warrenne to take your place—she does not want praise."

"You are mightily acquainted with Miss Warrenne in this short time," exclaimed Florence; "perhaps she is equally well acquainted with you through her brother. I have no doubt he has given you a nice character."

Maud was silent.

"Silence gives consent!" said Florence, triumphantly.

"Silence does nothing of the kind in my opinion," said Mr. Courtenay; "silence merely looks very handsome."

Florence bit her lip and glanced contemptuously at Maud, who stood blushing and silent, wondering how Miss Reynolds happened so very nearly to hit upon the truth.

"But I don't think I have the pleasure of knowing a brother of yours," said Mr. Courtenay, looking at Maud.

"You do *not* know him, I believe," said Maud, coldly; "he is in Mr. Thomason's employ."

"But Mr.—is it possible? Mr. Cooke—I mean Mr. Warrenne, is your brother?" said Mr. Courtenay hastily.

Maud was silent—she did not care to answer him—all the contempt that he had evinced towards Leonard was little indeed compared with that which swelled in her breast at the recollection of

it. She moved away towards Mrs. Creswick, leaving Miss Reynolds to answer his questions as she chose.

"I thought you were talking to her about her brother all this time," said Florence.

"I had not the least idea—not the faintest," said Courtenay, with energy, "that Mr. Warrenne was her brother."

"Dear me! and they are something alike—only he was so much better-looking. And how well he waltzed too; he was such a favourite with us all!" said Florence.

She did not seem to like the sudden keenness of Courtenay's glance, for she turned to the table and began to look over a book.

"How came he in a merchant's office, I wonder?" said Courtenay.

"I am sure it is throwing himself away," said Florence; "but I suppose that his father's means were too limited to allow of his entering a profession. He is very accomplished; you can't think how well he paints."

"Paints, does he? A sort of Crichton, I suppose?"

"Of course you would laugh at accomplishments in a man. I expected that," returned Florence, "you are so English!"

"English? I hope so; that is just my notion of myself. And this Magnus Apollo, young Warrenne, is then——"

"English too," said Florence pettishly; "but he has been abroad long enough to lose all the odious characteristics of the nation."

"And what may they be?"

"Oh, they are far too numerous for me to repeat!"

"And what is the topic?" asked Mrs. Creswick, who was crossing the room arm-in-arm with Maud.

"We are making a display of our patriotism," said Mr. Courtenay drily.

"Is he not detestable?" exclaimed Florence, turning to Captain O'Neill.

"Because I love my country," said Courtenay.

"That is always the case with people who love nothing else," exclaimed Florence. "I have a horror of patriots."

"What do we say to the example of the elder Brutus?" asked Mrs. Creswick cheerfully.

"A worthy soul as ever lived," returned Courtenay.

"Oh, I hate him—a wretch!" exclaimed Florence.

Captain O'Neill did not know the elder Brutus.

"Come, we must have your opinion," said Mrs. Creswick, turning with a smile to Maud.

"I think," said she, "there are some situations so difficult that it is impossible to sustain them becomingly. On those occasions you may be good, but you must give up all idea of being beautiful."

Captain O'Neill here whispered to Florence that *she* must, under all circumstances, be beautiful.

"But do you not recognize something beautiful in the fulfilment of a difficult duty?" said Courtenay. "In the struggle, in the triumph, is there not the high spirit of tragedy?"

Maud raised her eyes, all animation. This was a feeling she understood. Florence looking down on her bouquet was languidly pulling about the leaves.

"But all this while the piano is vacant," said Mrs. Creswick. "Florence, my dear."

"Oh, I have done," said Florence, half lifting her eyes, and dropping them again; "and Miss Stapylton has a cold or something—has not she, Captain O'Neill?"

"Yes; I think she said so," he replied.

"And I hardly think the Mansells play; but you can ask them—if you would, Captain O'Neill?"

It was very pleasant to be appealed to in this way. Captain O'Neill rose, and went to persuade the Mansells.

"You can sing some of Mrs. Hemans's ballads without your notes," said Mrs. Creswick. "Do give us one of your charming songs."

Maud would gladly have obliged Mrs. Creswick in anything great or small, but she caught a glance of Mr. Courtenay's which seemed to say, "You will have to sing after all."

She stopped almost in the act of rising, and said that she never could remember the words of a song; she would rather not attempt it.

"I think I have some of Mrs. Hemans's somewhere. I wish you would look, Captain O'Neill. You know my music pretty well by this time," said Florence, carelessly.

Mr. Courtenay smiled again.

"I cannot sing, Mrs. Creswick," said Maud earnestly. "You know I never can sing unless I choose my own time and place."

"Don't be afraid of me, Miss Warrenne," said Florence, with her usual insolent disregard of her female guests, "for I never listen while music is going on—I always talk."

This was strictly true. Courtenay gave her a searching glance, anything but complimentary in its character. Captain O'Neill laughed; he was not quick enough to feel her ill-breeding.

At that moment Miss Warrenne's servant was announced. She rose and wished Mrs. Creswick good-night.

"You had better let me see you home," said Mr. Courtenay, rising also.

"Thank you, I have a servant," replied Maud, as she passed him.

"Good-night, then," he said, opening the door for her.

"Nothing I dislike so much as learned conversation," said Florence, addressing Captain O'Neill. "My aunt and Miss Warrenne always get on some wise topic or other; but then it is very likely that she may be meant for a governess; she is the daughter of our medical practitioner."

"Very great kindness to admit her here at all, I think," said Captain O'Neill; "it occurred to me that she was rather presuming in her manners."

"Well, have you escorted Miss Warrenne home?" asked Florence, as Mr. Courtenay returned.

"No; she declined me. It seemed that she had a servant with her."

"Not much choice of servants!" said Florence, with a pretty playful laugh. "I believe that poor cripple comprehends their whole establishment. I should not wonder if he were to cook their dinner, as well as groom their single horse! He must have a good deal of leisure time, don't you think, Captain O'Neill?"

This was witty, and Captain O'Neill laughed very much, for though he was really poorer than Mr. Warrenne, being overwhelmed with debts, he was not reduced to living in such a miserable way. He kept two or three men-servants and half-a-dozen horses, though how he ever contrived to pay for them, or to keep them without paying, is known only to Irishmen of his speculative turn.

Now if Florence had said what she did in an ill-natured tone, she would have disgusted even Captain O'Neill; but say the most bitter things in a friendly, playful manner, and there are very few men who will not be delighted with you.

"I never judge a woman by her conduct to men, but by her manners to her own sex," said Courtenay to Mrs. Creswick. "In the one instance, she is candid; in the other, rarely so."

"I think my young friend is candid in both," said Mrs. Creswick, smiling, as she remembered Maud's coldness to Mr. Courtenay.

"I believe it. Will you contrive that I shall see her to-morrow?"

"Really, Mr. Courtenay, considering your father's object in sending you here," said Mrs. Creswick, smiling, "I shall not advance his views very much by granting your request."

"My dear Mrs. Creswick, it is too absurd—I am sure you agree with me—sending one after a wife in this way; and happily your niece and myself are agreed on the point. She dislikes me cordially; and, with all her beauty, I doubt if I am likely to commit suicide for her sake. Do indulge me."

"I will try what I can do to-morrow," said Mrs. Creswick. "I should rather like you to marry Maud Warrenne," she added.

"I should rather like it myself. You are going? Good-night!"

"I say, Courtenay," said Captain O'Neill, detaining his friend as he was leaving the room.

"Eh?" said Mr. Courtenay, looking sharply round.

"What *do* you think of her?"

Any one seeing Captain O'Neill's face at that moment would have reason to hope from its earnestness that he was putting a question relative to his salvation.

"Which?" asked Mr. Courtenay, quickly—"Miss Warrenne, or the other piece of goods?"

"Of course I mean Miss Reynolds; but really when you call her 'a piece of goods' it occurs to me——"

"Exactly," said Mr. Courtenay, interrupting his friend; "so it does to me. She was very smart to-night. You like pink, don't you? I thought so. She is very pretty, and very rich, and—I am very tired. Have you done?"

"No; of course I wanted to consult you; I always take your advice, you know."

"Naturally. "What is it now?"

"Will she have *all* old Reynolds's money?"

"Every sou, for anything I know to the contrary; but you can't expect her to carry about a sample of rupees, like a corn-dealer with his oats. She is an only child; but don't be sanguine; believe only in what you see; in the rose-coloured gown, for instance."

"Could you not get out of Mrs. Creswick how she is situated? Not that I care. I adore her! I think she is the most beautiful creature; but nobody can live on air."

"Not without a good deal of training," said Mr. Courtenay, mildly, "and you would not like the experiment, I daresay."

"And you have positively no intention," said Captain O'Neill.

"None at all. You will have half the county for your rivals; but take courage—I am not of the number."

And with these words Mr. Courtenay took up his candle and walked out of the room.

(*To be continued.*)

"BESIDE THE DYING EMBERS."

BESIDE the dying embers,
As midnight tolls its chime,
How mournful to remember
The Spring's enchanted time!
Without a ray to cheer us,
Without a blossom near us,
In sorrowful December
To muse on April's prime!

When wan the world reposes
Beneath its pall of snow,
How sad to dream of roses
That clustered long ago!
Of summer breezes winging,
Of summer warblers singing,
And in the woodland closes,
The ring-dove pleading low!

But saddest of all sadness,
As Life's last vigil nears,
To ponder on the gladness,
The glee of vanished years,
The smiles, the sighs, the glances,
Delight's unbroken trances,
Ere yet to love was madness,
Or mirth a mask for tears!

WILLIAM TOYNBEE.

OUR PRISONS, AND THEIR INMATES.

THE subject of prisons is, to most people, a closed one; an unexplored region known only to those who are compelled to render themselves inmates of the same, by virtue of necessity—in nearly all cases, through their own faults. A few enter prison voluntarily in the characters of salvationists, anti-vaccinationists, and others of the same species of defaulters, amongst which may be classed contempt-of-court prisoners. The larger number of these usually wish to get out again as quickly as possible, thus unconsciously paying a compliment to law and order, the wholesome state of prison discipline and its disagreeable but excellent routine.

The visitor on approaching the prison precincts will observe the forcibly forbidding look of the building, with its walls and grated windows and large gates. On ringing the gate bell, a small sliding "observation door" will probably be drawn aside, and an inspection of the person ringing the bell will be made by the gate warder, who next proceeds to open a small door.

On looking at the order you bring with you, he admits you. You are then requested to remain in the lodge, while the order is sent on to the inner part of the prison for the governor or his deputy, or the chief warder in case of the absence of the first-named officials.

You are then passed on by some other official to the inner portion of the building, but you are not as yet inside the prison proper, the offices being guarded by locked doors at either end, shutting them off from the various halls containing the cells. You are next shown into a waiting-room, or possibly the Governor receives you at once, if at hand, and, after countersigning the pass, hands you over to the chief warder to show you round.

Now you pass through a locked door into the body of the prison and you then see the whole interior of the same if built on modern principles. The halls containing the cells radiate from one centre, so that it is possible, as at Pentonville Prison, to see the whole of the interior at one gaze or nearly so. Some prisons have no radiating centres, notably Wormwood Scrubs Convict Prison (partially convict, partially local).

From the ground to the top of the building are tiers upon tiers of cells, to which access is gained by means of a landing open to the whole prison, and mounted by means of iron staircases. Reaching across from one landing rail to another may be noticed in some prisons a trolly running upon the rails, used to carry prisoners' food. What specially strikes the eye is the remarkable brightness of all polished portions of railings, etc., and the freshness of the painted

portions. These open landings, offering facilities for suicides, are sometimes wired over with a net, as at Holloway Prison, to prevent the same. It is curious that the remand prisoners most frequently attempt to destroy themselves; but perhaps this is but natural after all, as suspense and uncertainty are often more trying than absolute certainty, when sentence has been passed and has to be faced.

You will probably be shown a model cell, empty, and furnished with all the paraphernalia incidental to prison life. You will note the asphalte floor, the wooden bed, resting on the floor, the blunt knife (sharp knives would not do), the spoon, the tin pot, towel, and so on, but observe the absence of a looking-glass. This is an act of mercy, for many a prisoner would contemplate self-destruction could he see himself in anything but his bright tin pot. Prison dress does not tend to beautify, nor does closely-cropped hair, as is the fashion in convict prisons, add to the personal attractions.

You will also notice that the gas is outside the cell, not inside, thus preventing tampering with the same. A glazed window admits this light.

Outside the door is the card bearing the name of the prisoner, sentence, etc., and fixed on to the wall of the cell will be noticed a numbered flap, made of metal and connected with a gong. When the inmate wishes to communicate with the warder he turns a handle inside the cell, which causes the flap to stand out, the gong ring, and the official then knows the cell within which the call has originated. Vexatious ringing of the gong is summarily punished by a dietary restriction.

Experienced prisoners can sometimes ring the gong without allowing the tell-tale to project, but this is a refinement of prison cunning, and not often met with; though we have heard it successfully accomplished more than once, in the same prison, the offender being undetected, though *suspected*. There is one thing that the regular criminal loves, and that is giving trouble and annoyance to the prison staff; and if he can he will, and often succeeds.

The cells are always locked whether empty or the reverse. The empty cell is locked, to prevent a prisoner from concealing himself therein, and thus occasioning a good deal of search after him. This does not hold true in Public Works Convict Prisons, in which an entire and separate hall is occupied by men on out-door labour.

We have glanced at the model cell, let us now look at the occupied cell.

You will notice a small round hole in the door with a flap over it. This has been called the "Judas hole." It is used for spying purposes, and the prisoner cannot see, in most cases, any one looking at him from the outside. At one time the spy-hole was covered with a wire gauze, but this is now a thing of the past. If you raise the flap, you will see the inmate working at something, it may be tailoring, or some other occupation, and there is usually a languid method of working noticeable which perhaps is natural, cellular labour not

being very cheerful in its surroundings. From the habitual silence that reigns in a prison, the prisoners hear the least sound acutely, and they will look up in a vague sort of way when you are viewing them. On the other hand, the old prisoner, in point of previous convictions, does not care to trouble himself about anything or anybody, so long as he can get through the quantum of labour without incurring reports for idleness. This one will not, in all likelihood, move a muscle of his head, but will preserve a stolid and stoical indifference.

Leaving the cells, we come to the cooking-house, in which all the food in the shape of cocoa, tea, soup, potatoes, and suet-puddings, is cooked. The men at work in this department are usually selected on grounds of good behaviour; and the work is much sought after, affording distinct advantages in the shape of associated labour, warmth, light non-laborious work, whilst a certain surrounding of comparative luxury is present. Everything is cooked by steam, being turned on by means of a tap; and as a rule, there are no open fires, the steam being supplied from the prison engine, which is, like everything in a prison, worked by prisoners in charge of a warder.

Warders whose departments are instructional, are called trades-warders, possessing special knowledge of various occupations.

We next come to the bakehouse, in charge of a trades-warder, and here the bread is made, the flour being probably ground by means of a treadmill (the latter being in great disfavour amongst prisoners). The bread is most carefully weighed, and if in excess, or the reverse, allowance is made for the same before sending it out.

Specimens of the various articles of food are daily placed ready in the various food departments for the inspection of the Governor. The soup is most appetising; too much so perhaps, when the quantity is limited; and like poor Oliver Twist, we can quite understand a prisoner asking "for more."

The bread—*brown* for the ordinary men and women, *white* for the infirmary—is also good, though somewhat heavy, but it no doubt is "filling at the price." Butter is unknown, as also is milk, except this latter in Irish Prisons. The meat varies as to the source of its origin, it being sometimes tinned Australian, or fresh; shins of beef being the staple stock for the soup.

Leaving the bakehouse we come to the treadwheel, or treadmill as it is sometimes called.

This consists of a large wheel with steps for standing on, worked perhaps by some hundred or more men according to the size of the prison. The prisoner holds on to a bar at a level with the upper part of his body, and raises himself step by step; apparently only, as he does not really rise, as the wheel turns round. This is a very hard form of labour, and in great disrepute amongst the idle and lazy criminal classes. Each man has a separate compartment to himself within eyesight of two or more warders, and so many minutes at a stretch are occupied in keeping each party of prisoners on the wheel,

and so many minutes allowed (five, if we recollect rightly) off, when the men are allowed to sit at rest.

Water is pumped up in some prisons by means of this wheel. Formerly handcranks used to be employed in cells, which, by means of a dial or telltale, indicated the number of revolutions performed, but this, as well as all other species of *useless* labour, is now obsolete.

We now come to the laundry, in which the clothes are washed, mangled, and dried in large drying ovens, and laid out in kits ready for use.

Each prisoner's clothes are changed with the greatest regularity at stated intervals. Cleanliness is one of the most stringently observed maxims in prison routine, and every man has to enter a bath not less than once every fourteen days, as a hard and fast rule, unless in the infirmary.

Prison hospitals are, as seen in the newer classes of prisons, well-arranged buildings, light and airy. It is needless to say that this department is much sought after.

Inside this building will be found offices for the medical department, examining room, etc. The dispensing-room, with a dispenser attached thereto, a padded room for violent prisoners under medical observation, with a spy hole at the top of the room reached by some steps; various cells for the treatment of invalid prisoners requiring to be by themselves, and an association room or two in which are beds for the less serious class of cases, or for other reasons in which association is desirable. There are also isolated wards for infectious cases. Everything seems comfortable and pleasant, a most agreeable change from the severe routine and despotism of the ordinary prison.

Service is held daily in the chapel, and attendance is compulsory, unless under special exemptions. Other denominations may also be represented, such as the Roman Catholics, Nonconformist sects in general, Jews, etc., but such distinctions will not be met with in the smaller prisons, though usually recognised in the large convict establishments.

The Chaplain has multifarious duties in connection with his office, visiting the prisoners, advising them in various ways, and generally giving aid and good advice as regards conduct and observance of discipline.

Then we come to the "iron room" in which are hung the various means of restraint, handcuffs, leg-irons, figures of eight, the triangle and the cat, for corporal punishment. The triangle is a large and very heavy metal instrument, for fastening and securing a prisoner for flogging, and its weight prevents any removal of the same by the prisoner. The cat consists of a heavy wooden rod, about two feet long or less, having at its end a large number of cords (which are not now knotted), and with this weapon of punishment considerable pain may be inflicted by an experienced operator. Usually, if thirty-six lashes are ordered, three warders divide the number of strokes between

them, and receive gratuities for the same, the work not being a particularly pleasant branch of penal discipline. The medical officer is present at all floggings, and has, at his discretion, power to stop the decreed number of strokes. If it were oftener administered than it is, it would tend more than any other form of punishment to the repression of crime.

The visitor to the iron-room will notice various long chains hanging up, or being cleaned by prisoners. These are used for escort purposes, seven or ten men being handcuffed to these chains, and thus secured as a party for removal to distant convict establishments.

It may be mentioned, in passing, that the discovery of any printed or written matter of any kind on a prisoner is a serious breach of discipline, and is usually attended with unpleasant consequences, chiefly of a dietary nature and loss of marks, etc. That the greatest caution is imperative in searching prisoners for anything, it matters little what that anything is, so long as it *ought not to be there*, must be obvious at a first glance. A large Convict Prison contains many desperate men, some under life sentences, though these are not a portion more to be feared than short sentence men; but, at the same time, the love of liberty is paramount, and a prisoner to regain his liberty and to find himself once more in the open free air, to wander whither he pleases, will do anything to compass his ends. No one can predict to what grave consequences even a slip of newspaper may lead, as it may be a means of outside communication with friends who would often do all in their power to defeat the ends of justice.

We now come to the photographic department, in which scientific methods of identification and recognition of convicted criminals by means of photographs, are prominent. Every prisoner is photographed on being received into a penal establishment. Possibly he has been "taken" before at the same prison, so that he will be well known, and his previous career will be found on reference to his prison number, year of conviction, etc. The hands are always taken in the picture, great stress being laid on the means of identification thereby.

This practice of scientific art as applied to criminals is most important, so much so, that justice would be almost paralysed by a loss or deprivation of the same. Given that a certain man is "wanted," the question is, whether he is "known at Scotland Yard." If he is, then he is almost sure to be captured by means of photographic copies being widely distributed. Thus, the various prison authorities and the Criminal Investigation Department at Scotland Yard, are in constant touch one with another, and it often happens that when a man is convicted of a crime and sentenced to penal servitude, he has not completed his connection with the detective department, who will visit him by special permission in prison, and endeavour to obtain information as to confederates.

It would appear that but few criminals work alone, preferring

partners to share their spoil, and so minimise the risk of detection by numbers. The notorious Peace had no confederate, and he owed his conviction and execution to the confidence he placed in a woman.

Leaving the criminal art department we come to the visiting-room, in which prisoners are allowed at stated intervals to see and hear their friends, but not to come very close to the same. Picture a moderately small office, having on each side an enclosure covered in at the top by wire, thus forming a kind of cage, and dividing these two cages a central partition. In one cage the prisoner is placed, in the other the visitor, and *between them* is the prison warder. Nothing can be thrown across in either direction, the wire preventing this, even if the lynx-eyed warder were unobservant; and everything said is, of course, audible to the attendant, who has orders to check abruptly any conversation of an improper nature.

The visiting-room is one of the saddest spots in a prison, the meeting-place of blighted hopes and social ruin, and degradation.

We will conclude with a few words on the general outlines of prison structures, mentioning a few of the most prominent among them.

Wormwood Scrubs prison is perhaps the finest penal establishment in the world. Commenced some fifteen years ago by means of a temporary iron prison containing but a few cells for the accommodation of the prisoners engaged in the construction of the foundation work, it is now completed, the bricks having been formed from the clay in the immediate neighbourhood.

It is situated on the western portion of Wormwood Scrubs Common, parallel to the main line of the Great Western Railway, which is distant about three quarters of a mile or more. The prison is approached by a handsome gateway, containing medallions of Mrs. Fry and John Howard, facing the roadway, and affording a very handsome and in some ways unique exterior. Immediately facing the visitor are four large and very lofty prison halls, each containing more than three hundred cells, all constructed on the most approved principles. The gate of each hall is open work, so that one can see from the exterior the whole length of the hall and the cells on all sides.

Observe the striking height and width of this structure, with its tier after tier of cells, all open to inspection from the ground floor, and the two great windows at either end, somewhat reminding one of ecclesiastical architecture.

Passing through one of these great halls, we notice a most prominently conspicuous building of white Portland stone—the chapel; and it must be called the Queen of prison chapels. No spectator can deny the inherent charm of the building, though it is daily thronged by those wearing the garments of crime.

Not far from the chapel stands the infirmary, a model structure of its kind. Everything is to be found here that ingenuity can suggest, and, most important to the sick, light and air. This prison was built

entirely by convict labour, and everything, with the exception of the locks, was constructed through the same useful agency, thus evincing the possibility of obtaining the very best work from enforced labour.

Pentonville Prison is the oldest of our London prisons, built on the modern system. The first appearance of this structure, as seen from the Caledonian Road, Islington, is one of gloomy grandeur. A private road leads up to the gates, which are massive and surrounded by imposing stone-work, adjoining the governor's house. The halls are radiate, and are all visible from the centre, though no circle is actually formed, the appearance being best described as *partially stellate*. The halls are not so light as those of Wormwood Scrubs, being surrounded by buildings, but the general effect is good. There is a clock tower, with a large clock visible for many miles. At one time Pentonville was used solely for convicts undergoing their first nine months' probation in solitary confinement, but it is now a hard labour prison, for sentences up to two years.

Holloway Prison is a large, handsome structure, with towers reminding the spectator of a modern castle. The general details of this prison are somewhat similar to Pentonville, but from its situation, there is more light, and to a critical observer the impression is not so strongly "prison-like" as in the case of Pentonville. Here, as in other prisons, the lives of the captives are far more comfortable, healthy, and regular than the lives they lead in an unfettered state; but deprived of their freedom, under strict rule and discipline, obliged to work and to obey or take the consequences, they fret and fume and count the hours that shall restore them to liberty. Too many of them return to the world only to resume their evil ways where they were forcibly broken off, until once more coming under the hand of the law they are again for a time restrained. Perhaps no society is doing more good in its way or is more deserving of encouragement than the Society for the Help and Succour of Discharged Prisoners under the management of Mr. Wheatley.

AN ARTIST'S VISION.

THE rain splashed down, straight, heavy, and pitiless, while the November twilight closed in rapidly. The clouds hung dull and lowering overhead, and a thick grey mist exhaled from the damp earth and draped itself about the stripped branches of the brown trees.

I was young and an artist; my blood then ran warmly in my veins, and my heart beat high with ambition and enthusiasm. I could make light of hardships, and even love them for their own sake. But as I trudged along that dreary night through the stiff clay mud of a narrow country lane, hungry and soaked to the skin, between hedges of tall holly-bushes which streamed rain-water upon my head from little reservoirs formed by their polished concave leaves, I thought much less of my intellectual and artistic aspirations than of my chances of a warm supper and a comfortable night's lodging. For I was wandering on foot through one of the most remote districts of the North of England, with the object of at once filling my sketch-book and satisfying the Bohemian restlessness of my nature; staying a day here and a week there, as it pleased me; sleeping at village inns or in hospitable farm-houses, free as the breeze and almost as capricious.

I had walked that day some thirty miles over swampy moorland paths and through deeply rutted cart-tracks, where the mud clung tenaciously to my boots, and sucked at them as though it would tear them from my feet at every step, and I was anxious to find some homestead that would afford me shelter before darkness set in. It was much to my relief, therefore, that, just as the curtain of mist was thickening impenetrably around me, I espied a glimmer through the hollies on my right, and, pressing forward, turned a corner and saw the lights of a large farmhouse immediately before me. The lane I had followed ran straight into the farmyard and there came to an end. It was a *cul-de-sac*, and clearly my chance of a night's lodging depended on the hospitality of the inmates of the long low building with the high-pitched thatched roof, of which the outline could be dimly discerned through the gathering gloom.

A stream of mellow firelight issued from an open door, and revealed an interior that was rude and homely, but most inviting to a shivering and famished wayfarer. It was a large old-fashioned kitchen, paved with flags of the rough grey stone of the district, and lighted by the flames of an enormous coal and wood fire, burning in a huge open grate, under a mantelpiece formed of heavy slabs of freestone. Beside it stood a big semi-circular settle, or rough seat of painted wood, a common object in that neighbourhood, its distinctive

feature being a screen-like curved back, made of narrow upright deal boards, standing about nine feet high, both cumbrous and ugly, but very serviceable as a protection from the prevalent draughts.

The rafters of the room before me were adorned with the family store of bacon, smoked hams wrapped in sacking, bladders of lard, strings of onions, and bunches of dried herbs. One corner was apparently the saddle-room, and was hung with rows of shining bits, curb-chains, and bridles, as well as cart-collars and head-pieces glittering with polished brass ornaments. The walls were lime-washed a streaky yellowish-brown, and the firelight drew glancing reflections from the time-worn polish of a huge oak press and the glazed surfaces of the blue willow-patterned plates ranged on a capacious dresser. An appetising odour of fried sheep's heart was wafted through the door, and several big earthenware mugs on the long deal table, flanked by pewter spoons, horn-handled knives, and murderous-looking two-pronged steel forks, showed that preparations were in progress for the evening meal.

Bending over the fire to turn the hissing and spluttering contents of a shallow frying-pan stood a woman, young and vigorous, though ungraceful. Her figure was square and awkward, her plain gown was tucked up clumsily round her thick waist under a rough apron, her hair was untidy, and her arms red and muscular.

I was disappointed. The piquant contrast between the cheery kitchen and the cold rain without had raised my spirits, and I should have been pleased to be welcomed by some presiding genius more attractive than this too stalwart damsel. I stood irresolute, hesitating to make her turn and disclose the homely features which must needs accompany such a form, till the chill trickle of rain-drops falling down my neck from the brim of my hat washed away my æsthetic scruples, and I raised my voice to ask if she would direct me to the nearest inn.

The woman started and turned sharply round, letting the fat run over into the fire, so that bright blue flames started up around the sides of her pan. She was pleasanter to look at than I expected. Her movements were awkward, her clothes dingy, and her hands coarse, but her face was prettily flushed with the heat of the fire, and her expression had an appealing timidity, a startled nervousness, that interested and excited sympathy. But above all, and as an atonement for every other shortcoming, she possessed a pair of magnificent liquid dark eyes, soft as velvet—eyes for which a duchess might have bartered her jewel-box and been a gainer by the bargain, so full and tender were they, and so richly fringed with thickly-set curling dark lashes.

The girl's voice was mellow and deep, of pleasant quality, but quite uneducated, and she spoke with the thick North of England accent which had become so familiar to me. There was no inn within three miles, she said. Theirs was a lone house, and they had

no neighbours. I must have come sadly out of my way this wild night before I came to their door; and, glancing compassionately at my dripping clothes, she bade me enter and sit by the fire to dry myself, and wait till her father came in. Nothing loth, I accepted her invitation, and, seating myself under the hospitable shelter of the settle, I spread my chilled hands to the blaze.

What glorious eyes they were, so lustrous and so expressive, and how strangely out of keeping with the rough setting of the girl's face and figure! The incongruity between them, and the personality of their owner, annoyed me. I should have liked to remove them, and fit them into some ideal face that should be worthy of them. For, besides their physical perfection, they had a strange sympathetic attraction, and suggested the idea that some melancholy poetic spirit was imprisoned in that rude envelope of flesh, and looking out through those windows, was making signals of distress, and praying for help and release. The knight errant in me was stirred, and I burned to give the aid they seemed to ask.

I was roused from my fantastic dreaming by the entrance of the farmer and his three sons, who came in with a deafening clatter of heavy-nailed boots on the stone floor—four massive forms, bowed with labour, slouching in their loose blouses and clumsy cords. There was little need to proffer my humble petition for shelter. Before I had half told my tale, Dorcas, my velvet-eyed friend, was bid light a fire in the guest-chamber, and I was welcomed to a share of the supper, and a pull at the home-brewed ale.

I watched Dorcas with interest as she moved heavily about. She appeared to be the only female in the household, and at once mistress and servant. Her plate and mug were laid at our table, and, in the intervals of serving us, she sat down and snatched a hasty meal, but her time was almost entirely occupied with waiting upon us, and her attentions were taken as a matter of course. In this simple state of society, it was considered natural that the women should serve the men folks when they came in tired and hungry from their work in the fields.

"She is your daughter?" I inquired of the farmer, when Dorcas left the room for a moment, carrying a big brown jug to be refilled with beer from the cellar.

"Ay," answered the farmer gruffly, shooting a suspicious glance at me from beneath his shaggy brows.

The old man's manner was not encouraging, and I asked no further questions. It was, indeed, difficult in that circle to keep up any conversation whatever; to do so appeared contrary to the family tradition. My attempts at sociability were received in stolid silence, or responded to in monosyllables, till at length I made no further efforts, but sat dumbly gazing into the cavernous depths of the fire, or mutely observing the strong forms of the men who were gathered around me.

The faces of the sons were heavy, uninteresting, almost brutal, with apathetic lack-lustre eyes, and an expression of but little more intelligence than the beasts they each morning led to the plough. But the physiognomy of the elder man was of a different class. Heavy, it is true, but with the massiveness which speaks of power, not stolidity; a keen eye, that shot fire under the overhanging brows; and lines and wrinkles, which told that the storms of life must at some time have beaten furiously about his bent head, with its still abundant covering of long white locks.

I was losing myself in thought when I was aroused by the old man's voice inviting me to retire. They went to bed betimes, he said, and "happen" I should be glad to do the same. To this proposal my weariness made me gratefully assent, and I was taken up a short flight of shallow stone steps, along a draughty passage, to my bedroom in a remote part of the dilapidated rambling building. Here also a huge fire was burning in the old-fashioned grate, and the big rain-drops were coming straight down the wide open chimney, and falling with a sputter on the glowing embers.

It was a large low room with a damp unused smell, and an air of having been inhabited by people in a superior rank of life to those amongst whom I now found myself. The walls, judging by the depth of the window-seats, must have been of extraordinary thickness, and were hung with an expensive, though hideous, old-fashioned paper, printed with a sprawling design in bright blue and yellow, now peeling off with the damp, and much discoloured, though still in regrettably brilliant preservation. The mullioned windows were provided with neither blinds nor curtains, and the black darkness outside was plainly visible, while the rain drove violently against the latticed panes, shaking the crazy casements. The furniture was sparse, but solid; the bed, a huge four-poster, with columns of carved black oak, standing opposite the fireplace. It was unusually large and wide, and was hung with ancient and often-washed white dimity curtains, edged with a narrow braiding of faded red. I could not repress a shiver as I looked round this dreary apartment, and Dorcas, who was making up the fire by piling on dry crackling logs, looked round quickly, and I fancied I caught a gleam of compassion in her marvellous eyes. However, when she spoke I understood that the impression arose from the natural and unconscious expressiveness of the organs themselves.

"Ye needn't be oneasy about t' bed," she remarked stolidly, in the broad accent, which made me start every time she spoke. "I most-tings keep the faythers bed under my own, and the shoights and blarnkets have all been to t' foire;" and, arranging the last billet, she prepared to leave the room.

"You are taking a great deal too much trouble about me," I said warmly. "This is a delightful room; just the sort of place to be haunted and have a capital ghost story belonging to it. Some fellow

rattling his chain, or a wailing lady, or supernatural business of that sort."

The girl dropped the poker with a clatter and stood staring at me. She seemed inclined to take my suggestion quite seriously; so much so, that I suspected I must be near the truth, and that there was a story to tell about the grim old chamber. She stood looking at me dubiously as if about to speak, but thought better of it, and with a muttered, "Good noight to ye!" and a scared glance around, hurried away; closing the door after her with a bang which resounded queerly through the echoing passages.

"So the room *is* haunted!" I thought with a smile, and I liked it the better for that. It gave it dignity and interest, I told myself, as I gazed forlornly at the tattered blue and yellow walls.

A high-backed chair stood near the fire, muffled loosely in a cover of faded chintz, and looking like a stray stall from some dismantled cathedral, which, perverted from its proper uses, had assumed a disguise before adapting itself to secular occupations. With an effort, I drew this ponderous piece of furniture still closer to the friendly blaze, and sitting down began to muse over the strange quarters in which I found myself. Why had the girl looked so scared? The mention of a wailing lady appeared to startle her—was it possible that I had hit, by accident, on the actual legend attached to the dreary old room? By Jove, what eyes she had! What a pity they should be so thrown away! So I sat, till finding myself thoroughly toasted, and beginning to nod, with a slightly adventurous thrill I plunged into the shadowy recesses of the huge four-poster.

It was a bed to be remembered, that giant relic of former days! I did not fully gauge its size till I had obliterated myself in one corner of its ample pile of feathers, abundant enough for any number of ghostly bed-fellows. But the downy pillows were comfortable, and I was wearied with m hard day, and soon dropped into a sound and luxurious slumber.

I do not know how long I had slept, when I suddenly awoke, with a disagreeable impression that some unusual sound had broken my rest. I felt disturbed and uneasy, and a queer cold shiver was running down my back, in spite of the warm feathers in which I lay almost buried.

The rain had ceased pattering on the window-panes, and the wind was now howling restlessly round the house. It must have been a blast in the chimney that had waked me, I thought; and I composed myself to sleep, when the strange sounds which had mingled in my dreams rang painfully in my ears.

It was the wailing cry of a child, a young child, sounding far away as if from some remote part of the house, but still quite unmistakable, and as I recognised it, an unaccountable sensation ran over my skin. Again it was repeated, each time sounding nearer, till at last it appeared to issue from the passage outside my bedroom door

Thoroughly aroused, I started up, and looked round the darkening room. My fire was burning low, but the hearth was still covered with wood embers, emitting a sullen glow, while round a single blackened log a fantastic blue flame still flickered, and sent strange shadows into the gloomy corners. The high-backed chair stood as I had left it, drawn close to the fire, as though some ghostly occupant were cowering there, spreading its chilly hands to the warmth, and the leaded casements of the window shivered with a subdued and apparently causeless tremor.

Again the low wail was heard, evidently close at hand, yet, at the same time, sounding veiled and hollow, like an echo. What could there be in that child's voice to thrill me so strangely, making my heart and pulses leap, and cold beads of perspiration rise on my brow as I lay in my warm bed?

The cry came again; and this time there could be no mistake; it was at my very door. I closed my eyes involuntarily, and a faint sick shudder ran through me. Then came a deep sigh and a gentle rustle, and with a start I opened them again, and stared fascinated at the strange vision before me.

I dimly distinguished a female figure draped in some loose and flowing garment, and holding a shapeless white bundle carefully in its arms. There was a faint whispering rustle, but no other sound; not a board creaked under her footstep.

As she stepped into the firelight I could see that she was young and graceful. She wore a dressing-gown of old-fashioned damask, fanciful in design, but subdued in colour, and daintily finished with ruffles of delicate lace. A long Watteau sacque fell from her shoulders, and her soft dull-looking powdered hair was piled up high over a cushion. The bundle in her arms was made up of fine cambric and lace of a delicate make, though stained and yellowed, as if it had lain by during long years. Her face was turned from me, so that all I could distinguish were the graceful contours of her back, and the proud pose of her head, as she glided forward in her quaint clinging dress, swaying gently with an undulating rhythmic motion.

I tried to speak, but the words seemed to dry in my mouth, and I lay dumbly gazing, with a dull sensation of stupor and astonishment.

My fair visitant went straight to the fire, and seated herself on the great chair, laying her bundle on her lap, and sat there half-buried in the shadow, while the uncertain firelight danced palely over the white mass extended on her knees.

She remained motionless, and I was beginning to recover from my bewilderment, and to ask myself how in the name of wonder this delicately refined figure came to be in a rough farmhouse, when suddenly my heart stood still and my blood chilled in my veins; for the wailing infant's cry sounded again, unearthly and appalling, as if heard through some thick muffling medium, but proceeding beyond possibility of mistake from the midst of that white heap on the

woman's knees. Yes, the child was evidently there; and it would be ridiculous to describe the horror which took possession of me as I realised that simple fact.

The woman sat still, vaguely seen in the shadow, her head bent, and her long thin hands resting absently on the lace of the infant's robes. She made no effort to soothe the child or to still its cries, though the maddening wail grew more frequent, and at the same time faint and gasping, as if from exhaustion and want of breath.

At length, however, she seemed to become conscious of the distressful sound, and, turning back the lace which covered it, gazed steadily down on the little face, which I could dimly make out in the firelight. Then for the first time she turned her own towards me, but rather as if to avoid the sight of the child than from any recognition of my presence. Good heavens! what passions were expressed in that averted face! The concentrated hatred of that look still lives in my memory as a revelation.

I saw a young face, which ought to have been splendidly handsome, for it was oval in shape, delicately featured, and framed in an abundance of soft powdered hair. But it was the eyes which arrested my attention—lustrous velvet eyes, almond-shaped, and fringed with thick dark lashes—the very eyes I had dreamt of as I closed my own; those of the girl Dorcas; only matched with their appropriate face and figure, no longer puzzling and misplaced, but supremely right, and the crown of an almost perfect beauty. That is, at least, what they would have been but for their fearful expression—a wild hunted look of terror, combined with loathing and repugnance, that distorted the lovely countenance. Though I lay right in the line of vision, the strange eyes looked past me with an unseeing gaze wholly absorbed in an overmastering emotion.

A louder cry from the child seemed to rouse the woman, for she stood up and began to walk to and fro in the room, always carrying the infant, but with no attempt to appease it or hush its wail. Presently she paused in her walk, bent over the infant, and drew the lace veil down with elaborate care well over its puny face; then, turning, she slowly approached the great bed on which I lay. Breathless, I watched her as she silently drew near and deposited her burden on the side furthest from me, close to one of the heavy carved pillars at the foot of the bedstead. She moved deliberately, with an air of diabolical determination on her white face, dimly seen by the fitful light of the dying fire, though she stood so near to me that I fancied I could distinguish the lashes on her cheek and trace out the pattern of the infant's yellow lace outlined on the white counterpane. What did she mean to do next, and why did she stand there with such fierce hatred in her eyes, glaring down upon the shapeless heap of tumbled cambric?

Gathering her forces together, as if suddenly yielding to an evil suggestion, she snatched up a large square pillow which lay on the

bed, though I had not observed it till that moment, and with a demoniac gesture raised it in the air, held it for a moment hovering over the child, and then swiftly pressed it down upon the baby form below, and held it there with all the strength of her slender frame.

The child's cry stopped abruptly; there was a smothered groan, and then a fearful silence. But yet the woman stood there, still and terrible, weighing on the pillow with all her force, making certain that her unnatural crime should not fail in its result.

With an exclamation of horror, I broke through the spell which bound me and started forward; but as I did so, woman, child, and pillow dissolved and faded away, and I found myself frantically clutching the carved bed-post, trembling with agitation, a cold sweat standing on my limbs and forehead. The grey light of early dawn was stealing through the window and feebly lighting the room. The old chair stood where I had placed it; but there was no sign of any creature but myself in the great gloomy chamber: and no spare pillow.

Strangely bewildered, I crept back under the bed-clothes, and lay till the day had fully dawned, trying to explain to myself the vision I had seen, and to resume my usual mood of light-hearted recklessness. Had some ghostly visitant appeared to me from another world, and by some fearful constraint repeated her crime before me on the very scene of its committal. Or could it be merely a dream born of a feverish brain, which had wrought a fanciful web of horrible mystery out of an old chair, a gloomy room, and a pair of beautiful eyes, misplaced in the homely countenance of a household drudge? How strangely vivid and real it had seemed to me! My nerves still quivered at the recollection, and I half dreaded to see the heavy door turn noiselessly on its hinges and the beautiful shadow steal gently into the room, carefully holding her detested burden.

I did not tell my tale to the people of the house. I reasoned that I should either have to endure their ridicule, or leave a shadow of terror and mystery to dwell with them under the roof that had sheltered me. So I kept my counsel, and, deeply pondering, went my way.

The following spring my picture made its mark; and my fellow artists never tired of asking me where I had found the model from which I took that strange face with the pale hair, nor in what nightmare of beauty and horror the fiendish expression in her wondrous eyes had first been revealed to me.

J. Newton-Robinson.

PRESENTIMENT.

SINCE you insist, I send you the story of my dream, and if the *finale* renders it unfit for your collection, blame not me, but my friend, Hale.

To him I owe most of the enjoyable, the very few enjoyable, hours of my middle age. He rents a little cottage on the banks of the Dell, and allows me, whenever I choose, to propose myself as a visitor, even so unceremoniously as by telegram. If I receive no message in return, I take the train at Paddington, and, after a journey of three or four hours, find my friend's little cart waiting for me at the siding—it is little more—to convey me to Dellhurst, where he lives.

There I enjoy what I have sought fruitlessly in Swiss valleys, Italian picture galleries, and German watering-places: an antidote for that excess of work, in which, like most men of my time who do anything at all, I habitually indulge. For that there is but one cure —rest—the rest of absolute stagnation. This I find at Dellhurst.

Trout-fishing is the chief amusement of the place, and no one enjoys it so thoroughly as I do, because I never expect, or even hope to catch—I mean to hook—anything. Other people do, and, in consequence, are much perturbed by the wind, the weeds, or the trout, which all are, six days out of seven, in a place or a temper unfavourable to fishermen. I am content to hold my rod over the water; or, better still, stick it in the grass; while I revel in the fresh air and the quiet, and dreamily contemplate the idyllic scene and that play of small animal life by the banks of which it is the background.

After a day spent in this manner, I go home soothed as if by some ethereal opiate, and with an appetite which imparts to the simple supper provided by my hostess a flavour I miss in the elaborate compositions of the club-cook and other artists of high degree.

After supper, in a room too unadorned to be correctly called a drawing-room, Hale and I are permitted to smoke, while his wife plays to us delightful music, full of melody and rhythm, and at least a quarter of a century out of fashion. Or, leaving the piano and taking up her needle instead, she talks to me in a strain as soothing as her playing. On art, literature, or theology, she never touches—heaven bless her! The last item of village gossip or domestic news, the incredible stupidity of her servants, or the still more incredible precocity of her children: these are her favourite themes.

If Hale is left to entertain me, his choice of subjects is different, but no less refreshingly unintellectual. When he is not descanting

on the trout—a topic inexhaustible as Cleopatra's fascinations—he describes the condition of his dogs or his cows, his peas or his peaches. Listening to this happy pair, one might suppose that there were no such questions as those over which, in centres of civilization, men are fretting themselves and others into the madhouse or an early grave.

A small row of books in a corner of the drawing-room comprises the library of the house; they take in a weekly paper which nobody ever opens; and I have not seen any member of the family engaged in reading except the eldest child, who was studying a spelling-book. Yet both his father and mother have read at some time, for once she assured me that she had much enjoyed a novel called 'Margaret's Bridesmaids;' and he confessed that when confined to the house by a broken leg he had nearly finished 'Charles O'Malley.'

Need I enlarge on the charm and benefit of an atmosphere like this? Even more than the physical air of Dellhurst, does it lower my feverish pulses and relax my overstrained nerves. In those who continually breathe it, it begets an admirable placidity, an astonishing interest and even delight in life, combined—truth compels me to add —with considerable *naïveté*.

One day, when I was describing a brilliant entertainment of the season, where six times as many people as the room would hold struggled for places and panted for breath, Mrs. Hale seemed more surprised than impressed, and inquired:

"If it is not amusing, why do they have such parties?"

And with the same simplicity did Hale exclaim, over my account of a splendid little dinner:

"But if, as you say, you never have any appetite in town, how on earth do you manage to eat all these things?"

But the most remarkable influence of the climate is to give to such utterances a semblance of reason; for, however absurd they may appear to me in London, at Dellhurst I hear them with something like conviction.

For instance, I once gave them a circumstantial account of a *séance* where a celebrated *clairvoyante* had displayed such powers of divination that even my friend Dacres, a man of the most critical and sceptical spirit, was awed and almost converted. The unexpected effect of my narration on Mrs. Hale was to send her into fits of laughter. She said I was so funny; and when I disclaimed any intention of being so, Hale took his pipe out of his mouth to ask, quite seriously, if this exhibition had taken place in a lunatic asylum; and, I repeat, such is the singular influence upon me of these good people or their neighbourhood, that, instead of being angry, as I had good right to be, I felt abashed, and as if I had spoken with belief, or at least veneration, of the practice of some savage rite. The instinct of self-defence moved me to urge:

"But you must allow it was very extraordinary that the woman

could tell Dacres the name of the town where an incident of which nobody knew anything but himself had taken place."

"Yes—it was a lucky hit."

"But are you sure it was nothing more?"

"Why, what else could it be?"

"The supernatural power she declared it to be," were the words that rose to my lips; but when Hale, turning his head expectantly towards me, bent full upon me his strangely steady gaze: the like of which I have seen in the portraits and pictures of past centuries, but never in any living head: I suddenly appeared to myself so absurd that I had not the courage to offer it; and yet I perceived it to be perfectly rational when, a week later, I was talking in London to some very superior and talented people. Surely it is an example of the often-quoted irony of destiny that Hale should be the central figure in the dream I will now relate to you.

It came to me in that early morning doze with which I sometimes finish the feverish and sleepless nights prepared by a long period of overwork.

I dreamt that I arrived at the Dellhurst siding, and saw, with disappointment, that, though I had telegraphed to say I was coming, no cart was in waiting for me. I confided my luggage to the station-master, and started cheerfully to walk to Dellhurst village, breathing with rapture the fresh and fragrant air. I went along a dusty road, between hedges bright with the delicate green of early June; I passed under the shade of the little wood in whose leafy recesses birds were twittering gaily; I turned the sharp corner beside the old yews; I went down the incline that follows; I left behind me the first row of cottages and gardens, and, ten yards farther on, reached the white gate of my friend's house.

As I walked up the short, straight gravel path to the door, I noticed with surprise that all the window blinds were lowered. As the sun was shining full upon them, this would not in most houses have been an unaccountable circumstance; but the Hales have the same passion for sunlight that some people have for *bric-à-brac* or old coins, and it is their Arcadian habit never to lower a blind or shut a door that may admit the sun. Therefore I was still more startled to find the front door decorously shut. Out of respect for this unwonted fact, I went through the equally unwonted ceremony of ringing the bell; but was more relieved than disconcerted to find, as being more in harmony with preceding experience, that nobody paid any attention to the summons.

But my spirits fell again when I opened the door and went in. It was one of the good-humoured complaints against this tiny house that a step or a voice in one part of it was heard in every other; and yet, as I stood and listened in the little hall, I could not distinguish a sound—nothing but the tick of the cottage clock, strident against that deathlike stillness.

I opened the door to my right and looked in, to find there was no one in that little sitting-room. I opened another door and went down a narrow passage to Hale's own particular retreat.

Outside that door I paused. A presentiment of evil, at first slight as it was vague, had changed by this time into an overpowering conviction that a terrible discovery awaited me. Only by a strong effort I resisted the impression and desperately opened the door. This room was darkened like the others, and partly because of this, partly because my head swam for an instant, I could at first see nothing. But gradually I discerned that the whole arrangement of the furniture had been altered to make way, apparently, for an improvised couch or stand, on which stood a coffin draped with a violet pall. I went forward as if impelled by volition not my own, lifted the cloth, and beheld, white and still beneath, the dead face of my friend Hale.

I awoke suddenly, and recognised with unspeakable relief that it was only a dream.

Still, probably because I do not often dream coherently, this vision of the night returned to me more than once during the day as I busied over my preparations for a visit to a friend in Scotland. Still wearied, still unstrung, I found even these preparations exhausting, and retired to bed more jaded than before. I dreamt my dream over again without the slightest variation in the smallest detail. This time it left behind it a shade of discomfort which waking did not banish. I was moved to speak of it, as a most congenial topic, to my cousin Clara.

"Ah," she said thoughtfully, "there are hopes of everybody if you have taken to dreaming! Some day you will be converted after all. If I were you, I should write to your friend Hale."

"What! and ask him if he is dead?"

She shook her head and would not smile.

"I don't think he is dead yet; but I believe—I feel that he is in great danger; and sceptical as you are, you must know that I am something of a *clairvoyante*."

I would not admit how much this assertion disturbed me. The mere suggestion of harm to Hale gave me pain. I went home curiously depressed, and dreamt my dream for the third time. When I awoke it was late and my servant was bringing in my letters. One of these, from my friend in Scotland, requested me, on account of illness in his house, to defer my visit to a later season. By removing the only impediment to my going down to Dellhurst, this decided me to telegraph to Hale and say that I was coming.

It was the first journey thither that joyous expectation did not make positively pleasant, and I know not whether I was disappointed, however dismayed I may have been, to find at the siding no cart in waiting. Precisely as in my dream, I walked past the wood, the yew clump, and the cottages to the white gate of my friend's garden, there to discover that the blinds were lowered, that the door was shut. I

was not surprised that my ring remained unanswered. Hope had vanished, and I entered, prepared, like an actor whose *rôle* is fixed, to go through the grim part I had rehearsed. And it was all the same: the pause, the silence, the empty sitting-room, the walk down the passage, the rush of irresistible premonition at the door. Again I hesitated—again I defied my own fears and forced myself to open the door, and again for a moment, giddy and dazed, saw nothing but mist and shadow. But as it cleared away, the room was before me exactly as, waking, I had always known it, and by the writing-table, Hale, in his shirt-sleeves, was looking for something in a heap of hooks and other trout tackle.

At my sudden entrance Hale did not start, for that he never does; but when, by slowly turning his head, he beheld me, his countenance showed surprise and even concern.

"Sit down a bit, old chap!" was his only greeting, as he quickly left the room. When he returned it was with some brandy-and-water, which he silently offered, and I as silently accepted. In a few minutes the dreamlike feeling passed away, and I could see Hale sitting opposite to me and attentively considering me.

"What on earth have you been doing to yourself?" he asked.

"I think I have been overworking myself."

"Ah! I see. Well, we will soon put you to rights. But why did you not wire for the cart?"

"I did. Did you not get my telegram?"

"No. But now you mention it, I did hear of some telegram kicking about the house—supposed to be for my sister Lucy, and which she could not understand. I suppose it is Lucy, by the way, who has been giving this family vault sort of look to the house by pulling down all the blinds."

He rose and improved the effect, so far as his own room was concerned, by pulling up his blind in such a way that it made with the sash of the window an angle of about forty degrees.

"Why is the house so quiet? Where is everybody?" I asked.

"In the hayfield—every soul in the house, including the cook and the baby. I only came in to get a needle. I have got a thorn in my finger. I am going straight back, and you with me—not to work though, not a stroke! You must look on with the baby."

"But, Hale," I cried, as the last film of presentiment seemed to vanish in the sunlight, "are you all right?"

"Right? I am as fit as possible! Why should I not be?"

But as I looked into his sane eyes, the only reason I had to give seemed so childishly ridiculous that I had not the courage to offer it.

UNDER THE MOON.

DOWN in the valley the fairies call,
One to another, and all in tune,
Under the gaze of the silver moon,
By the silver waterfall.
They dwell in the fairy bowers all day,
Under the hills and far away;
But at night, when the moon shines round and clear,
In the merriest month of the fairy year,
They come above the ground and play—
King and queen, and lady and knight,
Jester and page and minstrel gay—
And light is the beat of their slender feet
To the song of the minstrel, sweet, oh sweet;
And soft is the glance, in the gleaming dance,
Of the eyes of maidens round and bright:
And merrily thrown is the dark fir-cone,
While the acorns fly from hand to hand—
For the ringing valley is all their own,
And theirs are the loves of Fairyland.

Oh, to live in the fairy halls,
And dance by the silver waterfalls,
Dance with the fairies, dance and play,
Under the hills and far away!
Then with the flashing fairy train
Merrily gambol back again,
When the silver moon shines round and clear
In the gladdest month of the fairy year;
And the shrill bells ring
In the tallest grass,
And the minstrels sing
As the pageants pass;
And the merriment swells
To the sound of the bells,
In the mossy clefts and the open dells—
Ever and ever a fairy bold,
Never to die and never be old;
But under the sea and under the shore,
In the shining courts of the fairy halls,
By the crystal caves and the waterfalls,
To live and love for evermore—
Far away from the night and day,
Under the sea and under the shore,
For ever and for evermore!

GEORGE COTTERELL.

"NOW THEN, HAVE YOU ANY PENCILS TO BE CUT?" SAID COURTENAY, THROWING HIMSELF ON THE BANK BY MAUD'S SIDE.

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1893.

THE ENGAGEMENT OF SUSAN CHASE.

By Mrs. Henry Wood, author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER VI.

MR. LEICESTER.

IT was early morning in Barbadoes. A carriage, which had been on its way to Bridgetown, was suddenly stopped by its inmate, and ordered back to whence it came. So the black driver turned it round, whipped up his horses, and soon drove into the grounds of a pretty country residence.

A lady, young and nice-looking, descended from the carriage, and entered the house. She passed into one of the sitting-rooms, closed the door, and sank down on the sofa; if ever tribulation was expressed on a human countenance, it was on hers.

"To bring herself to shame!" she wailed—"to quit her husband's home clandestinely, and depart with another, over the wide seas!—to enter deliberately on a wrong course!—to desert him on what may be his bed of death! And to leave me here, unprotected, in his house, where I ought not to be! Oh that I had known Emma better, and never come out to her!"

Susan Chase suddenly stayed her words, and held her breath. A gentlemanly voice was accosting the coachman, who, like all his native fraternity, was taking his own time ere he drove off to the stables, and the conversation ascended to her ears through the open window.

"Have you brought back your mistress, Jicko?"

"No," cried Jicko. "Mistress not anywhere. Mistress gone to England in the ship."

"Nonsense, Jicko! You are inventing."

"Ask missee," responded Jicko. "She know."

The gentleman turned from Jicko, and entered the sitting-room. He was one of the clerical staff at Barbadoes, and had recently been appointed to a church there; previously to that he had acted as an

assistant, or missionary, though in holy orders. He was about thirty years of age, with a prepossessing, intellectual countenance. His name was Leicester.

"You have not found Mrs. Carnagie, Miss Chase?" he said to Susan.

What answer was Susan to give? This gentleman had been present when she departed, half an hour before, in search of her sister, had closed the carriage door for her, and agreed with her in assuming that Mrs. Carnagie had slept at the friend's house, where she had gone to an evening party the previous night. To confirm the news that her sister had departed clandestinely for England, was to betray all: yet how keep the tidings from him? Confused words rose to her lips, but one contradicted another; and bewildered, terrified, and helpless, she burst into an hysterical flood of tears.

A suspicion of the truth arose in the mind of Mr. Leicester. For he had been a frequent visitor, and had observed, with disapprobation, certain points in the recent conduct of Mrs. Carnagie. Susan sobbed like a child. It was not often she could be aroused to such emotion, but when it did come, it was uncontrollable.

"Strive for composure," whispered Mr. Leicester. "I fear you are in some strait, some deep distress, apart from the anxiety caused by the illness of Mr. Carnagie. You want a friend: my calling has led me amidst suffering and sorrow of all kinds: dear Miss Chase, let me be that friend."

"Oh that I had a friend!" answered Susan. "I am indeed in a strait; and I know not where to turn to for advice or help."

"Turn to me: tell me all that is causing you grief. Believe me, I have had so much experience in the varied tribulations of life, that I am old in them, beyond what my years may seem to justify. All that the truest counsel, the deepest sympathy can do for you, I will do."

Susan listened. An adviser she must have; left to herself, she should sink under the weight of care that was upon her; and in all Barbadoes there was not one she would rather confide in, than in this kind, conscientious minister; no, not in any, even double his age. Yet she still shrank from speaking, and she turned her aching head away from the light.

"I heard from Jicko that Mrs. Carnagie has departed for England, and I infer that you and her husband were left in ignorance of her intention," he resumed, in low tones, anxious to invite confidence by showing that he was not unprepared for it. "May I tell you, Miss Chase, that I have almost foreseen this? may I also tell you that I remonstrated privately with Mrs. Carnagie not a week ago, and entreated her to be more with her husband, and less with Captain Chard?"

So! he knew it all. The crimson flush came into Susan's cheeks, but she dried her tears.

"Oh, Mr. Leicester, she may not have gone away with him—in the worst sense of the term. Things between her and her husband have not been pleasant, especially on my sister's side. She has grown to dislike him; she told me so: and she is headstrong and self-willed. She may have departed to separate herself from Mr. Carnagie, without —without anything worse."

Mr. Leicester could not adopt this unusual view of such a case, but he did not press his own. "How did you become acquainted with her departure?" he inquired.

"As I was going along, one of the officers rode up to the carriage to ask after Mr. Carnagie, and remarked how unfortunate it was the fever should have attacked him, just when Mrs. Carnagie was called to England. He said he was on the ship, last night, when she and her maid came on board."

"Which of them was it?"

"Lieutenant Grape. He also observed that it was lucky Captain Chard happened to be going in the same vessel, as he could protect her," added Susan, eagerly. "Therefore *he* suspects nothing amiss."

"Does Mr. Carnagie suspect it?"

"Oh no. When he came home last night, ill, he asked for Emma, but she had gone out then. How distressing that the fever should have come on so rapidly."

"It has not come on rapidly," returned the clergyman. "I was sure it was attacking him, yesterday morning, and told him so."

"You have had more experience than I, in these West Indian maladies, Mr. Leicester—indeed, I have had none at all: do you judge him to be dangerously ill?"

"I do fear so."

"This step of my sister's has placed me in an inconvenient position," she resumed, without raising her eyes. "It is awkward for me to be here alone."

"Yes, it is. You had better come to us, Miss Chase. Mrs. Freeman will do all she can to make you feel at home."

Susan reflected, hesitated, reflected again, and then spoke. "I would most willingly and thankfully come, but do you deem that I should be acting rightly in leaving the house at this moment—in leaving Mr. Carnagie entirely to servants?"

"Of course your care and supervision would be worth more than all they can do. Your remaining here would be better for him."

"Then I will remain," said Susan. "It seems to be a duty thrown in my way, and I will not shrink from it. As soon as he shall be out of danger, if you and your sister will receive me until I can make arrangements for my departure to Europe, I shall be thankful."

"You are not afraid of remaining in the house—afraid of the fever?"

"I have no fear on that score," returned Susan.

"I thought that was why you spoke."

"Oh no. I thought—I thought—whether any ill-natured remarks might be made, at my being here alone."

"Certainly not; oh, certainly not," said Mr. Leicester. "You are closely related to Mr. Carnagie: his wife's own sister."

True. But Susan knew that Mr. Leicester was not aware how ardently she and Charles Carnagie had once been attached to each other; how they had been engaged for years. *There* lay the chief reason for the inexpediency of the measure. Not inexpedient in itself: Susan was secure in her own self-reliance: but, those at home, who had been acquainted with the engagement, might say his house was not the place for her now.

"I am not learned in these points of etiquette," resumed Mr. Leicester, perceiving that Susan still looked doubtful. "If you think it would be better, I am sure my sister will willingly come here and stay with you, until you can remove."

"Oh, how pleased I should be!" uttered Susan, with animation; "that would put an end to all difficulties. Do you think she would really come? Would she not fear the fever?"

"She would not fear that. She had it a year ago. I will promise that she shall be with you before the day is over."

"What should I have done without you?" exclaimed Susan, in the fulness of her gratitude.

The clergyman rose to leave. "I hope to be more useful to you yet."

"Stay an instant, Mr. Leicester. Will it be possible," she added, lowering her voice, "for us to favour Mr. Grape's supposition that my sister has really been called to England. You know a ship did come in, that day, with letters. It will be an untruth; but in such a case may it not be justifiable—in charity and in mercy? She may not, after all, have gone there wrongly: excepting, inasmuch as that she has left her husband's home."

"You still cling to that idea," he observed. "Well, I do not see why it should not be favoured. If the impression is abroad that she has gone legitimately, it will only be for you to leave it uncontradicted."

"You will not hint to the contrary?" breathed Susan.

He looked at her reproachfully. "No, Miss Chase. But there are the servants here."

"I will manage that."

"And—there will be her husband, when he is better."

"Yes," said Susan, inwardly shivering. "We cannot tell what his belief—his course—may be. But he may not live."

Mr. Leicester quitted the house, thoroughly convinced as to what Mr. Carnagie's belief would be, though he might not be so certain as to his course.

The promised friend came without delay: Mrs. Freeman. She was a young, lively widow, very much given to talking. She openly

lamented, and that ten times over in the course of the first day, the inopportune summons to England of Mrs. Carnagie. Mr. Leicester had kept faith, even with her, and Susan's heart thanked him.

"My dear, I admire you," she cried to Susan. "Many a young lady, situated as you were, would have flown off with Mrs. Carnagie, and left the poor man to the mercy of the fever, and the natives, who are just as stupid and tiresome as so many animals. It was exceedingly good and praiseworthy of you to brave the infection—which, truth to say, is fonder of flying to fresh Europeans, like you, than to old acclimatised ones—and to brave the chatter of the gossip-mongers."

"You think they will chatter?" cried Susan.

"I think they might—for you and Mr. Carnagie are both young—had you not hit upon the plan of having some one in the house as chaperon. Of course they can't now. My brother could not understand that they would, in any case; but his head's buried in his duties, like an ostrich's in the sand, and he judges people and motives in accordance with his clerical tenets. *I* know the set out here; it is whispering and scandal, among them, from morning till night. That Mrs. Jacobson's the worst, and she is your sister's dearest friend. Is she going to make a long stay in England?"

"I am very grateful to you for coming," said Susan, avoiding the question.

"Not at all, my dear. If we did not help each other in this world, where should we be when we come to answer for ourselves in the next?"

"You are sure you do not fear the fever?"

"Not I. I had it last autumn, and it will not pay me a visit again. They were saying at Mrs. Lettsom's, last night, that Mr. Carnagie was surely in for it."

Susan lifted up her head with interest. "Were you at Mrs. Lettsom's?"

"Yes. It is not often I attend evening parties, but Mrs. Lettsom promised me some good music."

Susan longed to put a question—if she dared. How could she frame it? She wanted to know whether Emma had appeared there at all.

"Did—was this voyage of my sister's spoken of?" she said, at length.

"Not at first. None of them knew of it: at least, so I inferred. Mrs. Lettsom was openly wondering what had become of her, as she had promised to be there. Towards the end of the evening—morning it was by that time—when we were breaking up, a note came in from Mrs. Carnagie, saying she had been summoned to England on urgent business, and had been too busy with her preparations to send an earlier apology."

Many people called that day and the succeeding ones, to inquire

after Lieutenant Carnagie. They were, for the most part, content with driving up to the door and driving away from it; only a few entered, probably "old acclimatised ones," as Mrs. Freeman expressed it, who did not fear the fever. There was a difference of opinion in Barbadoes, even amongst medical men, whether it was infectious, or whether it was not so: many held that it was not so, though it frequently became epidemic. Mrs. Freeman saw all visitors in place of Susan; and she unconsciously (without having an idea that the facts would not have borne her out) helped to keep up the assumption that Mrs. Carnagie had gone to England on business. Susan might possibly have betrayed herself, for she was a bad dissembler, but she was too inwardly miserable to see any one, and she had her excuse in attending upon Lieutenant Carnagie.

He was very ill. For four days Susan and the head servant (a native woman, who had grown-up children of her own) scarcely left his chamber. At the end of that time the fever abated, and he grew conscious. The fifth day, he lay in a half-stupor, his eyes only open at intervals; the sixth, he was decidedly better; and, though he scarcely spoke, seemed to watch what was going on.

Towards the evening of this day, Brillianna (they give themselves such fine names, those poor natives!) had gone from the room, and Susan was alone. She was sitting by the bed, half asleep, for an unusual sensation of drowsiness and languor was over her, when she was startled by the invalid's putting out one hand and taking hold of hers, which happened to be resting on the bed. It shook and trembled with weakness. Susan, in her compassion, did not withdraw hers, but leaned over him.

"You are better, Mr. Carnagie. We are all very thankful."

"How long have I lain here?" he murmured.

"To-morrow will be the seventh day."

"I suppose I have been in danger?"

"Oh yes; but that is over now. Quite over."

"Where's Emma?"

The question turned Susan sick. WHAT was she to answer?

"Since I regained consciousness, I have been looking for her, but I have never seen her. All this day I have been waiting, and keeping awake on purpose, but she has not come in."

"She—has—gone from home for a little while," stammered Susan. It was the best excuse that arose to her.

He raised his head with a start, but it fell back again, and both his hands clasped over Susan's, from, as it seemed, emotion.

"Susan! Is *she* ill? She has not caught it, and died in it?"

"No, indeed," returned Susan, in earnest accents, "I assure you it is not so. She is quite well, and has not been ill. Pray do not agitate yourself: it might undo all the amendment. She is only from home, as I tell you."

"I want her to come and see me. I want to be reconciled to her.

We have been going on very unsatisfactorily, but if she will forget and forgive, so will I. Ask her to come, Susan."

"I—yes—when you are better," stammered Susan again.

"Is she afraid of me?—afraid of taking the fever?"

"No—yes—perhaps she is," faltered poor Susan.

"Can you get her here to-night?"

"No; not to-night. In a few days—when you are stronger."

"How is it you did not run away from the infection, as well as Emma?"

"I am not afraid of taking diseases: I have been more amongst illness than Emma."

"And you have remained with me, and she has flown!" proceeded Mr. Carnagie. "Yet she is my wife, and you——only one whom I rejected. Oh, Susan! my blind folly presses upon me sorely now. I have marked you around my bed, watching me, as she ought to have watched, and my heart has been ready to burst at the reflection that, but for my insane conduct, it would have been your own place."

She was much pained, and strove to draw away her hand.

"Let it be," he quickly said, holding it closer between his own. "You cannot grudge its resting there for a minute or two: you were willing, once, to let it rest there for ever. Do not be angry, Susan: I am not going to insult you, by saying that I care for you, still, more than anything else on earth; but the contrast between your conduct and hers is casting a dark shadow on me now, and I must speak out."

"Mr. Carnagie," she said, "you are Emma's husband; it is for her sake that I have remained with you in your dangerous illness. You are not repaying me as you ought. You must know these words and allusions to be unfitting and unkind."

"Ay; I am Emma's husband, and we are only brother and sister. I know, and see, and feel all that I have lost, and I know that I must put up with it, and make the best of what *is*. I am prepared to do that: I tell you, I have been hoping, as I lay here, that I and Emma may mutually forgive each other, and go on more cordially than we have hitherto done. What else would you have, Susan?"

"Oh, if it could be!" aspirated Susan, from the very depths of her despairing heart.

"But this is an unpromising beginning towards it," continued Mr. Carnagie, "her going from me in this way. Suppose I had died?"

Susan had nothing to answer.

"And you say she will not come home, now, for some days. Where is she staying?"

"You—you shall know particulars when you are stronger," replied Susan. "You must not talk now."

Brillianna returned to the chamber, and Susan left it, afraid lest the questions of Mr. Carnagie, as to his wife's absence, might become too close. She went to the drawing-room, and sat with Mrs. Freeman.

"Brillianna says her master is better this evening," observed the latter.

"Much better," replied Susan.

There was a silence. Presently Mrs. Freeman spoke again, but she received no reply. Susan's eyes had closed. The lids looked swollen, and her cheeks were burning. Mrs. Freeman gazed at her in dismay.

"Miss Chase?"

She spoke loudly and abruptly, and it aroused Susan.

"What is the matter with you?"

"Nothing," answered Susan. "Only I feel sleepy, and my head aches. It has been hot and heavy all the afternoon."

"I do not wish to alarm you unnecessarily, but it looks just like the fever coming on."

"Oh, not here!" uttered Susan, growing nervous at the fear presented to her. "I should not like to be laid up in Mr. Carnagie's house."

"I declare you have its very symptoms. I hope it may not be so. I will remain with you, should it prove so; be assured of that."

"But to be ill in this house!" persisted poor Susan, harping upon the, to her, most unsatisfactory point in the prospect. "Could I not be removed to yours?"

"If you particularly wish it. But our house is not so healthily situated, or so roomy, as this. We shall see how you are to-morrow."

But when the morrow came it was too late to remove Susan Chase. The fever had come on with a vengeance. It is probable that her harassed state of mind contributed to increase the delirium.

"Two invalids on my hands!" ejaculated Mrs. Freeman. "Well, I must prove myself equal to it. The danger is past with Mr. Carnagie, so I will turn him over to one of the others, and Brillianna shall transfer her nursing to Miss Chase. She's as obstinate as a mule, in temper, that woman, but she's a famous nurse. As to myself, I'll divide my supervision into three parts; two to be given to Susan Chase, and one to Mr. Carnagie."

When Mrs. Freeman could spare a moment from Susan, she went to pay her first visit that morning to Mr. Carnagie. "There is no need to ask how you are," was her salutation to him. "You look as brisk as possible; very different from what you looked three days ago."

"Yes, I am all right again. Brillianna says Susan is ill."

"She has taken the fever."

"I am vexed to hear it. Is there a fear of delirium coming on?"

"It is on already. Raging. New constitutions are knocked down soon. But there is one consolation, Mr. Carnagie; it will be the sooner spent. The fiercer the storm, the quicker it's over. I do not fear but that she will get through it."

"*Of course* her sister will come home to nurse her," emphatically uttered Mr. Carnagie.

"Who, come home?"

"My wife. If she kept aloof from me, she cannot do so from Susan."

"How can she come home?" cried Mrs. Freeman.

"How can she stay away?" retorted Mr. Carnagie. "Her own sister, who came out purposely to take care of her in her illness! she cannot let her lie and die—as it may be—amidst strangers, and not come near her. Have you sent to inform Mrs. Carnagie?"

Mrs. Freeman did not reply. Her private opinion, just then, was, that Lieutenant Carnagie's delirium had come back to him. She never supposed he could be ignorant of his wife's voyage.

"Where is it that my wife is staying?" he resumed. "I asked Susan yesterday, but she did not say. Only at Mrs. Jacobson's, I suppose."

"Well," remarked Mrs. Freeman, "this is the first time I ever knew that the fever obliterates the recollection of previous events. It will be a new point for the consideration of the doctors. Have you quite forgotten that Mrs. Carnagie sailed for Europe?"

Mr. Carnagie lay and looked at her. "Mrs. Carnagie has not sailed."

"Yes, she has. That is why I am staying here with Miss Chase. It would have been a cruel thing to leave her, in your house, without a protector, and you, perhaps, dying."

Mr. Carnagie was weak and ill, and he began to wonder whether his memory had played him false, as Mrs. Freeman asserted. He carried his thoughts back to the past. All in vain.

"I have no recollection," he said: "I do not comprehend, at all, what you are saying."

"Dear me! I hope it will return to you, as you grow stronger! Your wife started for England by the last packet; it sailed the very morning that your delirium came on. Ruth went with her; and Captain Chard sailed by the same vessel, and is taking charge of her on the voyage. Don't you remember now?"

At that moment Brillianna put in her head, and beckoned Mrs. Freeman from the room. It was well that it was so; otherwise, that lady might have obtained a curious elucidation of matters. Mr. Carnagie had time to digest the news, and to form his own opinion upon it. Whether an explosion of angry passion, or any other emotion, was given way to, cannot be told; he was alone; but the next time his medical attendant came to visit him, he insisted that something must have thrown Mr. Carnagie back, for he was worse again. Not a word said Mr. Carnagie.

CHAPTER VII.

THE END OF AN ILL-STARRED VISIT.

Mrs. Freeman's theory of "the fiercer the storm, the quicker it's over," whether right or wrong, in a general sense, certainly appeared to apply to the illness of Susan Chase. The turning-point in her malady soon

came, and then she progressed rapidly towards recovery. One day, after she was about again, she was sitting in an easy-chair at the open window of the drawing-room, when Mr. Carnagie came in. Mrs. Freeman had gone for an hour or two to her own home.

"Well, Susan," he said, "I am tolerably strong again, considering what the pull has been. Where's Emma? You said I was to know when I got well again."

Susan's face became livid. She was still weak, and the question terrified her. This was the moment she had so dreaded.

Mr. Carnagie drew forward a chair and sat down by her. "Shall I tell *you*, or will you tell ME?" he said, in a marked manner.

Some words escaped from Susan's white lips; something to the effect of "did he know where she was?"

"I do. Was it not a fine recompense?" he continued, with suppressed passion. "We will say nothing of me, her husband, but of you. To bring you out, and then to throw you off in a strange place, without proper protectors, separated from your home and friends by the wide seas! Abandoned, shameless woman! Did you know of her flight the evening she left?"

"Oh no," answered Susan, who was trembling excessively. "If I had, it should have been prevented; by forcible means, had entreaties failed. What shall you do?"

"Need you ask? There is only one course open to me."

"And that?"

"Shoot Chard, and get a divorce."

"Oh, Mr. Carnagie!" she exclaimed in startled, wailing tones. "Do nothing in precipitation. It may not be so bad as it appears. She may have gone away only to separate herself from you, without any—any other intentions. Nothing suspicious, as to her voyage, has transpired here: it is universally looked upon as an innocent step. I do not wish to judge between you and Emma, but you must be aware that there was much ill-feeling between you."

"Say on her side, if you please," was his reply. "There would have been little on mine, but for her own temper and conduct. From the first hour that I brought her out, she gave me nothing but reproaches and cold looks; and for no earthly reason."

"She—she—some injudicious people told her tales to your former prejudice," stammered Susan, always a peace-maker, and anxious to offer what excuse she might for her erring sister.

"Psha!" angrily retorted Mr. Carnagie. "No matter what she heard to my prejudice, as to when I was a single man, it could not affect me as a married one—or her, either. Had she heard that I had fired Bridgetown, and boiled down the natives for soup, it was no business of hers. I brought her out here, Susan, to do my duty by her, to be a good husband, as a true-hearted man should be, and she was a fool, and something worse than a fool, to rake up my old scores against me. You would not have done it."

That was very true. But Susan did not say so.

"It has been folly and madness with us both, throughout the piece," he continued, "and now, I suppose, we are reaping our reward. To gratify a wild, hasty fancy, each took for the other, I was false to you, Susan, and to every spark of honour that ought to have stirred within me. I——"

"Mr. Carnagie," she interrupted, "speak on any topic but that. It is ungenerous of you to allude to it."

"I know that: it was but a passing allusion: but I should like you to glean how bitter to me are the ashes of self-reproach. I should think they are to her—for her conduct at that time—for you had been to her a tender, loving sister, and did not merit such a requital. What has followed that ill-advised step? We have led a cat-and-dog life together, and now she has lost herself; and I"—he stamped his foot—"am dishonoured in the sight of men."

"Have proof before you judge her harshly," whispered Susan again. "She may not have proceeded to extremes, or intend to do so. I will not believe, until I have absolute proof, that a sister of mine could so forget herself."

"I will wait for no proof, and I will never spare her," vehemently answered Mr. Carnagie. "The very moment that the law will rid me of her, I will be free. I am surprised you can seek to palliate her conduct, Susan, for her sin and shame tell upon you and her own family, almost as they do on me. Let us drop her name for ever."

He rose and stood as if gazing on the verandah, and the prospect beyond it, probably seeing nothing. Susan's thoughts turned, perhaps in spite of her wish, to the past, when she had been looking forward joyfully to her marriage with him. That marriage had been frustrated: yet here she was, in little more than twelve months, in his house, alone with him, far away from her own home and kindred; alone with him, now, in this room, and yet not his wife! It was very strange; and it was very undesirable; even with the visit of Mrs. Freeman, it was undesirable. Susan felt her position acutely, and leaned her head on her hand in perplexity.

"What a future to be anticipated!" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Carnagie. "What will it be?"

"Ay, indeed," said Susan, rousing herself. "She did not think of her future when she left her home."

"*Her* future!" he scornfully rejoined—"her future requires no speculating upon; she has plainly marked it out for herself, and entered upon it; I was speaking of my own. Solitude and dissatisfaction are before me."

"I feel for you deeply. I wish I knew how to whisper a hope that it may be soothed to you."

"I wish you would whisper it, Susan," he answered, returning to his seat. And again there was a pause, which Mr. Carnagie broke.

"In a certain time I shall be clear of her. I do not know how

long these proceedings take, but I shall go to England and enter upon them immediately: they will grant me leave under the circumstances. In a few months, from now, I shall be a free man. Will you not whisper a hope for that period, Susan?"

She did not catch his meaning. "What hope is there that I can whisper?"

He bent towards her; he spoke in low tones; tones as tender as they had been in the years gone by. "Can it never be again with us, Susan, as it used to be? Will you not come out here, and take her place, and be to me my dearest wife?"

Susan sat with eyes and mouth open. "Mr. Carnagie!"

"If you will only forgive my infatuated folly, and remember it no more. Oh, Susan! put it into my power to atone for it! When the time shall come, if you will only have pity on me, and be mine, my whole life shall be one long atonement. Remember what we were to each other; let it come to us again. United in heart and hand, blessings may be in store for both of us."

Had Susan been strong and well, she would no doubt have left Lieutenant Carnagie and the room to themselves; as it was, after a vain attempt to rise, which he prevented, she burst into a miserable flood of tears.

"It needed not your presence here to renew my affection for you," he proceeded. "It had never really left you, though it was obscured by the ill-omened feeling that rushed over me and—her. That feeling, call it by what name we might, was neither affection nor love: it was a species of frenzy, a delirium, without foundation and without strength, and that's the best that can be said of it. Had you not come out here, Susan, my affection for you would have died away by degrees; in your presence, and with my wife still true to me, I would have buried it, and did bury it, within myself; you should never have heard of it or suspected it. But she is gone, and you and I are left: I pray you let us agree to render the future bright to each other."

She wrenched away the hand which he had taken, and covered her burning and tearful face, whilst sobs choked her utterance. "Oh, Mr. Carnagie! you are very cruel!"

"I love you better than of old: I love you, as I believe man never loved woman: I will strive to make your life one long sunshine. Susan! you are in my house; you tended my sick-bed and brought me round; you have no other protector here but my own self. Surely it all points to the expediency of your promising to become my wife. You must see it."

"Will you be generous?—*can* you be generous?" she uttered, in sarcastic tones, yet almost beside herself.

"I can, and will, be generous to you."

"Then release me, that I may instantly go from your presence. You will, if you have a spark of manly feeling within you."

"Will you not listen to me?"

"I will not listen to you: how dare you ask it? My sister is your wife; your wife, Mr. Carnagie; and you are disgracing yourself and insulting me. To suffer what you have been saying to enter your thoughts, much more to give utterance to it, ought to have dyed your brow with shame. Proceed no further: I have friends in the island, close at hand, who will protect me if I appeal to them."

He looked gloomily at her. "Have you learned to hate me, Susan?"

"I had not learned to hate you. I esteemed you, and liked you, as my sister's husband. You are teaching me to hate you now."

"Look at my future," he returned; "consider what it will be. Left here, to my deserted home, without any to care for me, or to make it what a home ought to be; pointed at as a wronged man!—have you no compassion for me?"

"Yes, I have every compassion for you—as your wife's sister. All other ties between us have long been over."

"Never to be renewed? Will no entreaty persuade you? not even the pleadings of my unhappy love?"

"Never! Never! I would almost rather have died in the fever than have lived to receive this insult: I would far rather die than become your wife! You see that poor black slave," she vehemently cried, pointing to Jicko, who was at work in the garden—"well; were it offered me to choose between you, I would marry him rather than you!"

Mr. Carnagie gave vent to a violent explosion of words, and strode from the room, closing the door after him with such force that it shook the slightly-built house. And Susan Chase, shattered in spirit and in frame, fell into hysterics and sobbed and cried, unheard by all.

She was growing more composed, and had risen to go to her own room, when Mr. Leicester entered. She sat down again, vexed that he should observe, which he could not fail to do, the traces of emotion on her face.

"I bring you a message from my sister," he said. "She finds more to look to, at home, than she anticipated, and will not be able to return before dinner: not until late in the evening."

Susan's state of feeling was such that she dared not speak. Her heart and eyes were brimful and running over. And now to be told that Mrs. Freeman would not be back until night: all those hours alone in the house with Mr. Carnagie.

"You do not look well, Miss Chase," he observed: "well or happy."

The tears must come; there was no help for it, and they rained down; but she managed to steady her voice.

"Mr. Leicester, you were kind enough, before my illness came on, to give me an invitation to your house. I wish I could be moved there."

"It is the very thing I and Mrs. Freeman have been speaking of to-day," he answered, pleasure beaming from his eyes. "We think the change would be most desirable. As soon as you shall be a little stronger, Mrs. Freeman can return home, and you with her."

"I am strong enough now," answered Susan, and her tone struck Mr. Leicester as one of painful eagerness. "Let me come at once, this afternoon. I cannot walk so far yet, but Jicko can drive me in the carriage. I shall not trouble you long," she continued, "for I shall sail by the next packet."

"Oh, no, indeed," he interrupted, answering her last sentence, "the next packet goes in a few days; we must keep you longer with us than that. Putting other considerations aside, you would not be strong enough to undertake the voyage."

"Strong or weak, I must go," she replied; "I cannot remain in Barbadoes. I wish I had never come to it."

"I hope nothing unpleasant has happened," he said, speaking with hesitation.

"No," returned Susan, evasively, "nothing particular. Only—after—after the step my sister has taken, it is not agreeable to me to meet Mr. Carnagie. I shall be truly thankful for the shelter of your house and protection until I sail: and perhaps some time, in England, opportunity will be afforded us of returning your kind hospitality."

"Dear Miss Chase," he said, in low tones, "need you sail at all?"

Susan looked at him. Was *he* going to plead for Mr. Carnagie? No; he was going to plead for himself; and the warm colour rushed into the wan face of Susan. Perhaps she had half suspected that he might some time do it.

"You propose to honour my house for a temporary visit; to accept of my temporary protection: oh, Miss Chase, may I not ask you to accept of them for all time? I have admired and loved you ever since we met, and my dearest wish has long been that the future shall see you my wife. Let me hope for it!"

What with one offer and another, Susan was certainly confounded. She did not, in consequence, answer so readily as she might have done.

"My sister is soon to marry Mr. Grape," he resumed: "I mention it, lest you might deem her being with me an impediment in the way: but she probably has told you. All that the most tender——"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Leicester," interrupted Susan, recovering her senses; "pray do not continue: it will only be painful to us both. I feel sensibly your good opinion of me; your kind offer; and I thank you, but I can only decline it. Firmly and irrevocably decline it."

"Have you another attachment?" he asked, with saddened eyes and flushed face.

"No, indeed: but that is nothing to the purpose. It is impossible for me to entertain your offer. Please, do not recur to the subject again."

He sat silent a few minutes; he saw there was no hope for him: that she meant what she said; and, with a sigh, he prepared to depart.

"Then—I will go back now, and tell my sister to expect you?"

"Yes—if——" Susan looked at him and hesitated. After what had just passed, would he like her to become his guest, she was asking herself. Mr. Leicester's thoughts were quick.

"I am going up the country on a mission," he hastened to say. "I start this evening, and shall be away some days. I am sure Mrs. Freeman will strive to make you comfortable, both for me and herself."

How Susan thanked him in her heart. He held out his hand.

"I may not see you again, Miss Chase. May the blessing of Heaven go with you, wherever you may be. Fare you well!"

"Farewell, and thank you for all," was her tearful response, as she returned his hand's fervent clasp.

She watched him away, and then she stepped on to the verandah, called to Jicko, and ordered him to get the carriage ready. Next she proceeded to her chamber, gave directions to Brillianna about sending her things after her to Mrs. Freeman's, and then she sat down and wrote a brief note to Mr. Carnagie. Before she had well finished it, Jicko and the carriage came round. Susan tottered down the steps of the verandah, entered the carriage, and so quitted Lieutenant Carnagie's roof for ever.

Within a week, she was in her berth, on board the good ship, which was ploughing the waves on its way to England. And that was all the recompense and the satisfaction that Susan Chase obtained from her well-intentioned but ill-starred visit to Barbadoes.

(*To be concluded.*)

ON VANITY.

PRIDE and vanity, though differing in their first origin, often intermingle and become indistinguishable in their later stages. But pride much seldomer mingles with vanity than vanity rises up to pride. If we may put it so, pride is independent, self-supporting, stand-offish, and cold; whereas vanity is dependent on other's opinions, fickle, fussy, and apt to chatter of itself and its ways and claims. Pride will not listen to flattery, and in few cases will it condescend to bestow it. Vanity is constantly on the search for it, and adopts all devices to gratify itself in this direction, and is indeed apt at flattery with a hope of return in kind. All courtiers are more or less vain—only some of them are, in the true sense, proud, because pride is not well content to stoop and bow and flatter. Mortified pride will sometimes give way to vanity, and vanity gratified will sometimes shake hands with pride. But the obtaining distinction between pride and vanity is that pride concentrates certain of the faculties which vanity dissipates—will and affection in particular. The proud man may be strong in will, and may love deeply, intensely. The vain man can scarcely do so; his absorption in himself in a small way is so complete; and both strong will and love imply a power of going out of self towards some other object. The proud man also may be capable of great self-denials which the vain man never can. Dante, for example, was a proud, but certainly not a vain man, and the same might be said of Milton and of Wordsworth. On this last point it has been well said: "A vain man is so busy in bowing and wriggling to catch fair words from others that he can never lift up his head into true pride. Pride, in former ages, may have been led in too good repute—vanity is so now. Pride, which is the fault of greatness and strength, is sneered at and abhorred—to vanity, the froth and consummation of weakness, every indulgence is shown. . . . Vanity is unable to stand except by leaning on others, and is careful, therefore, of giving offence; nay, is ready to fawn on those by whom its hopes are fed." "Many men," says another, "spend their lives in gazing at their own shadows, and so dwindle away into shadows thereof." These are the vain ones. Shakespeare, in *Richard II.*, thus appraises vanity, with the same thought prominent in his mind:

> "Light vanity, insatiate cormorant,
> Consuming means, soon preys upon itself."

"Who wants to see a masquerade? might be written under a looking-glass," says one of the Brothers Hare; and this, we add, might be taken for a motto to vanity.

In Mrs. Henry Wood's *Lord Oakburn's Daughters*—a story which is as remarkable for fine character-study as for quickness of invention—we have contrasted studies in the proud and the vain character. Lady Jane Chesney, with her devotion, reserve, fine reticence, and keen self-appreciation, was in the best sense proud. Lady Laura Carlton, flighty, changeable, suspicious, yet dependent on others' estimates of her, was essentially vain; and in the whole of the present-day fiction you would hardly find a pair of more truly contrasted natures, yet with a vague underground of family likeness which makes the matter all the more artistically true.

Sometimes Lord Tennyson has used the word "pride" when he had more in his eye the attributes of vanity, as when, in the "Idylls of the King," he makes Earl Yniol say:

> "And since the proud man often is the mean;"

for meanness is much more possible in alliance with vanity than with pride. And when, in "Lady Clara Vere de Vere," he makes the hero say:

> "Your pride is yet no match for mine—
> Too proud to care from whence I came,"

we really have a vivid contrast between pride and vanity. Lady Clara Vere de Vere's was vanity, after all, compared with the pride of the poet addressing her.

We may wind up with a short extract, as penetrating as it is well expressed:—

"Proud of his newly-acquired knowledge of the art of exhausting the contents of an egg, the well-known little boy of the apologue rushed to impart his knowledge to his grandmother, who had been for many years familiar with the process which the child had just discovered. Which of us has not met with some such instructors? I know men who would be ready to step forward to teach Taglioni how to dance; Tom Sayers how to box; or the Chevalier Bayard how to be a gentleman. We most of us know such men, and undergo, from time to time, the ineffable benefit of their patronage."

One of the inseparable accompaniments of vanity, and the note by which it can be known, is the ceaseless craving for external marks of distinction and notice. How neatly and naïvely the *Talmud* hits this; bringing it home by image to an Eastern people: "The camel wanted horns," it says, "so he lost his ears."

A. H. Japp, LL.D.

MRS. JANZ' JAR.

IT was a scorching day. I need not have written that, if I had first remarked that it was Eastertide in Ceylon. John Janz and I were seated on the verandah of our bungalow beside the sea, smoking our hookahs, and lazily listening for the whistle of the train which was to bring our mutual friend, Henricus Vanhorst, to spend some of his holidays with us. In reality, Henricus's days were all holidays.

I must explain that at this period (many years ago now) I had lived in Ceylon for only a few months. But my friendship with John Janz was of many years' standing, for he had been educated in England. He was the son of one of the best burgher families of the island—descended from the early Dutch settlers, and displaying a full share of the characteristics of that race in the way of shrewdness and love of comfort. He and I had together bought a small cocoa-nut estate on the seashore not very far from Colombo. We intended to live on our property, and go up to town for our business there, by means of the little railway that ran along the coast. We had already settled our simple furniture, had cut the coir matting to fit the dining-room floor, and here we were, veritably smoking the pipe of peace, for we had nearly quarrelled over the hanging of our two or three pictures.

The hoarse whistle of the engine reached our ears. The train, crammed with holiday makers, rushed past our bungalow, and there was our friend waving his handkerchief from a carriage window.

The station was a little way below our house. Not many passengers alighted there. We could easily make out Henricus. He had something hanging from one hand, and he paused, giving directions, as it seemed, to one of the station functionaries. At first we thought he was not alone. Two female figures alighted from the same carriage, and kept close to his side while he talked to the native porter. Afterwards they walked beside him along the road, all three unmistakably conversing.

"Who on earth is he bringing with him?" said John Janz, mystified.

I laughed, rather significantly. For Henricus Vanhorst was a very popular young man. He was good-looking, musical, and vivacious to a degree, but I was never quite sure whether his very considerable fortune did not weigh in his favour, quite as much as these attractive qualities—especially with the ladies! So I answered John thus:

"Some mamma and her treasure of a daughter."

"No, you are wrong," said John, much relieved. "There they

go;" for the group paused a moment, and then parted, the two women climbing over the low wire fence, to get down to the sea. Henricus gallantly assisted them over. To do this the more gracefully, he deposited what he was carrying in the roadway, and it seemed to us as if the ladies protested against his taking this trouble, for the one to climb last stooped down and actually lifted the thing up as if to return it to him, but Henricus fluttered over it protestingly, and then handed her over the fence. He lifted his hat to them as they went off, and they looked back at him several times. This pantomime was very amusing to John and me, and we were still laughing over it when Henricus reached the verandah.

Looking dubiously at the jar which Henricus carried by its bamboo handle, John inquired anxiously after the "stores" which Henricus had been commissioned to bring. Oh, they were all right, down at the station; our "boy" must go to fetch them at once. Then why had he troubled to bring the jar? Because Mrs. Janz herself had given it to him to bring to her dear son, and he had faithfully promised not to let it out of his sight. It was full of pickle of her own making, fine bamboo pickle—John's especial favourite. John knew his mother's little ways, and though he himself sometimes gave them a gruff snub, he liked Henricus the better for his kindly humouring of them.

Now we had entrusted Henricus with another commission more serious than "stores," but less savoury. John and I had put nearly all our ready money into our estate, and we wanted to borrow some more to carry us along. We had deputed Henricus to negotiate a loan for us from one Schrader, a wretched old man, miser and money-lender, resident in Colombo. So when our greetings were over, and we settled down again in the verandah, a brief silence ensued, and when we met each other's eyes Henricus knew what was in our thoughts; and he said:

"I have been able to do that little business for you. Old Schrader will let us have the money, but he asks fifteen per cent." And Henricus actually laughed.

"Then he can keep it," said I. "If it is not to be had on easier terms than that, we will do without it—somehow."

"But," answered Henricus, "the old chap was so anxious for us to take it—said he had it in the house and so on, that I thought it was best to take him at his word—and I've got the money!"

"What!" cried John Janz, "did you agree to pay fifteen per cent. interest? You might have known we could not do it!"

Without deigning verbal answer, Henricus dived his left hand into the breast pocket of his coat, drew out a roll of notes and flung them on the table, in my direction.

"There!" he said, "you asked me to get you this money—and here it is. Why cavil about terms?"

A new thought struck me. "Henricus," I said, 'pardon me, but

how on earth did you get this loan from Schrader without our signatures? There is some mystery in this!"

Henricus flushed deeply. He did not reply. But in a minute he rose from his lounging chair, and picked the roll of notes from the table. He undid the string which secured them, carefully counted them, and put them back into his breast pocket.

"I've fulfilled my part of our agreement," he said, with studied carelessness, "but if you don't want the money now, it can go back. Let us try a cigar. I have got a new brand which is highly recommended."

His cool manner made me feel rather ashamed of the heat I had displayed. John Janz seemed to share my feeling. We accepted the proffered cigars and puffed away in silence, which we did not break till the "boy" came up from the station with the residue of our stores.

We passed the rest of the day idling about, amusing ourselves as we could. Henricus was very boisterous, but at intervals it seemed to me that he watched me curiously, as if to divine my inmost thoughts. I did not know whether young Janz noticed anything peculiar in his manner. But after Henricus had retired to rest John said to me that we had not heard anything about the two women who had evidently travelled with him. John lazily wondered who they were, and we did not carry the conversation further.

John Janz had known Henricus Vanhorst from boyhood. My acquaintance with him dated from my arrival in the island. But his family had been well known to different relatives of mine for more than one generation. He was an orphan, and his father had left him a fair fortune, so that he was under no necessity to labour for a living. But as a certain fair Julia Paulusz had declared she would have nothing to do with a man who idled away his time and got into mischief, Henricus had become secretary and treasurer to a certain "Friend-in-need" society—an appointment for which his best qualification was a genial readiness to disburse all his salary among its needy clients.

Henricus always seemed like a big, good-natured boy; his face ever wore a sunny smile; his kind hazel eyes beamed on all; beggars blessed him as he passed them, and I have come upon him surrounded and followed by groups of juvenile mendicants.

So little business-like was he, that we felt it more wonderful he should have remembered to negotiate with old Schrader, than that he should have allowed the miser to dupe him. I could not help feeling that I had been rather hard on Henricus, who had doubtless done his best for us, *i.e.* exactly what he would have done for himself.

Old Schrader was indeed a miser of the bitterest type. He lived for his money, but nobody could tell what he lived on. John Janz had been used to declare that he prepared a broth from the bones we often saw him gather in the streets. But I judged that meal would

be too expensive, for you cannot make bones into broth without kindling a fire, and nobody had ever seen any smoke issue from Schrader's dwelling. That dwelling was shared by a miserable little boy, who seemed to represent some sort of inconsistency in the miser's family; for though the child was awfully neglected, and chiefly depended for support on the doles of the neighbours, still, why did Schrader keep him at all? The miser's wretched domicile also generally had another inmate, but that was one in no way dependent on him—who undoubtedly paid him rent, whom he perhaps regarded as some sort of able-bodied protection for his gear, and who undoubtedly took the care of his own creature-comforts into his own hands. This was the miser's nephew, a man named Reeves, well known in the little burgher community. Henricus had called on Reeves once or twice to engage his interest for the miserable little child whom Henricus had discovered among his hordes of pensioners. Reeves always expressed much sympathy, and promised to do his best, declaring however that his uncle did not like him, and resented his interference.

When we three young men met next morning, all traces of our "tiff" had vanished. Henricus and I purposed to go a-fishing. John said he should stay at home and arrange his stores. Our way to the sea lay across the railway line, and, as the early train had already brought in the daily mail from Colombo, there was a newspaper for me. Henricus walked on leisurely, and I sauntered after him, reading as I went.

There was seldom anything of surpassing interest in our paper. But to-day, as I hastily scanned the columns, my eye caught the startling heading—

"Mysterious disappearance of Mr. Schrader." It was then set forth that at 2 A.M. yesterday morning, Mr. Reeves, the nephew of Mr. Schrader, was awakened by a great noise of trampling feet. As his uncle often had clients who sought him secretly at unreasonable hours, he was not at first alarmed, but lay and listened, when he became impressed by the total absence of the usual accompaniments of loud and often angry voices, and by the profound silence which presently followed the cessation of the trampling footsteps. Thereupon he opened his door, and called his uncle's name, and getting no answer, walked down the passage to his uncle's room. He found the door wide open, the room empty and in disorder, and a pool of blood on the floor from which he could trace blood all down the passage. But his uncle was nowhere to be seen, nor the child. Reeves had at once given an alarm, and the house had soon filled with people. No constable had come on the scene for some time, in which interval, the ground round Schrader's house was hopelessly trodden by scores of footprints. No blood could be found anywhere outside the house, and all search for the miser, living or dead, had been utterly fruitless.

Here was a tragedy! As I looked up from the paper, I saw Henricus dawdling along, looking back for me, but as I raised my eyes to our bungalow I saw John Janz rush out and make after him, his face ghastly white and his eyes starting from their sockets. Henricus saw him at the same minute and stood still. It was he to whom Janz cried:

"What infernal trick have you been up to?"

"What's the matter now?" asked Henricus with his accustomed coolness.

"What! Don't you know? Then come and see!"

And he turned back and walked before us as we returned to the house. The verandah was full of the cases from which John had been unpacking his stores, and on a table stood the jar which Henricus had been so careful to carry himself from the station. It was open, and was evidently the cause of Janz' wrathful horror. I peeped into it rather gingerly, for who could tell what foolish trick a romp like Henricus would play. I was prepared for anything—except what I saw.

It was a man's head!

I stepped back with a cry. Henricus stooped forward, and exclaimed: "It is a head! It is the head of old Schrader."

I had failed to recognise it, though I had already read of Schrader's disappearance, but Henricus knew it at once.

We looked at each other in silence. John Janz was first to recover from the shock. "Is that the jar you got from my mother?" he asked in a slow cold voice.

"Yes," said Henricus; "at least, I should have sworn so five minutes ago."

"On your honour, you never touched it?"

"On my honour, I never touched it. Your mother herself came with it to the train. Your mother's boy carried it, and he put it into the carriage, while she and I took a turn on the platform. I never touched it till I lifted it from the carriage and brought it here, as you saw me."

"Well, well," said John, "whatever this means, I'm sorry poor mother should be mixed up in it."

In my excitement, and with sundry recollections seething in my mind, I turned to Henricus, looked him full in the face, and said:

"You had no hand in this, surely."

"No—none," he said, stoutly.

He uttered no reproach at the suggestion, but he met me with a glance of his kind hazel eyes, before which my own fell. Then he turned towards the terrible jar. "Poor old Schrader!" he said. "Why, I saw him myself late on the evening of the day before yesterday. So he must have been murdered since then."

"Yes," I answered, "he was murdered in the small hours of yesterday morning. You can read about it."

And while he was glancing through the newspaper report, my recollections were busy, and took on an even more sinister tinge. What was to come next?

"Dear, dear," said Henricus, dropping the paper. "Well, I'm glad I didn't part from him in anger. It will be a lesson to me. For I very nearly did. He and I had a high old time in the early part of our interview. But what are we to do?"

We could all understand the gravity of our position. I took a card from my pocket, and scribbling on it the words "Come to us at once," I called in our "boy" and despatched him therewith to my friend Joseph Diaz, one of the leading lawyers in Colombo.

Then I said, "We ought to get a little light on this before we give information to the police; so while we wait for Diaz, I hope, Henricus, that you will not take it amiss if I ask you a few questions."

"I'll answer what I can," said he quite calmly.

"Do you mind telling us what you did all day yesterday?"

"Well, I got up at six in the morning; breakfasted and bathed as I always do; wrote two or three letters; made a call; at ten was at the office; took the one o'clock train here. You know the rest."

"Then what did you do the day before?"

"In the morning I had a headache and stayed in bed till I went to office. There was very little doing till about twelve o'clock, when Mrs. Jonkless looked in. You know the Jonkless people live close by Schrader's house. She had come to tell me that the Schrader child would soon be dead of starvation and neglect, and she thought somebody ought to take the matter up. I heard all she had to say, but discounted a little, knowing the woman is a busybody and gossip. However, in the evening I went to Schrader's house and found the child sitting in the passage, crying bitterly. He told me a story of cruelty and privation almost incredible. I gave him a trifle and sent him away to buy food, and then I knocked at the door of the miser's room, where he always kept himself locked in. He was in no great hurry to admit me, and by the time he appeared, I had worked myself into such a rage over that child's misery, that I just caught him by the coat-collar and shook him. He slipped out of my clutches and went back into his room yelling for help. I rushed after him with my cane, but I bethought myself and stopped, and told him, in pretty strong language, what had brought me there. To my astonishment he seemed ready to promise anything for the future, provided I would not go back on his past treatment of his *protégé*. I got him to express willingness to pay for the child's schooling, and to let Mrs. Jonkless provide it with necessaries at his expense. Then he suddenly became quite friendly, and asked me if I would not like to borrow a little money—if not for myself, then for some friend. I have to own that it was only then that I remembered my promise to negotiate a loan for you! So I asked him his terms. And he said he would deal with me for fifteen per cent., which was five per cent.

under his usual figure. I told him I wanted none of his money, on any terms, for I would warn my worst enemy not to get into his clutches. But he made believe to treat my words as a joke, and said if I wouldn't to-day perhaps I would to-morrow. So we parted. I found Mr. Reeves hanging about the verandah, evidently listening; and no wonder! for he must have thought the house was coming down when I first made for the miser. I explained the cause of my stormy visit, and Reeves laughed, and said he was 'glad his uncle had got it hot—it always did him good.' So I came away."

At this point Henricus hesitated and flushed. So I said:

"Tell us everything, old fellow. It is not a time for delicate reservations."

"All right," answered Henricus, desperately—"so here goes. Well, after I left Schrader's, I went to call at The Grove."

John Janz and I grinned. Julia Paulusz lived at The Grove.

"Well," said Henricus, "I was talking with Cyril Paulusz and—and Julia about disguises. Julia had been reading 'East Lynne,' and she and Cyril could not realize that Lady Isabel could disguise herself so thoroughly that her husband should not know her. But I said disguises could easily pass undetected if unsuspected; and, for my own part, I would undertake to disguise myself so completely that they would never find me out, though I should say to them beforehand, 'Expect me in a few hours.' They threw down the suggestion as a challenge, and I took it up, and ran off home, laughing over the scheme and without the least idea how I should carry it out. As I reached my gate, I met the dustman going in for his evening collection. It occurred to me that here was my chance. After calling at my place, the dust-cart goes on a good deal further before it returns past my verandah, and then turns down the Green Road, where The Grove is, you know. So I called the dustman inside my house, and said that I had a joke on hand, to carry out which I should like him to call at my house on his return journey and deliver his cart into my keeping, while he could go on to the dust-pits to take charge of the cart when I should arrive there and surrender it. He was very reluctant at first, but the offer of a rupee or two made him quite agreeable. Well, my whole plan succeeded splendidly. I 'made up' so well that I trotted up and down in front of the verandah where Julia and Cyril were sitting without either of them dreaming that I was not what I seemed." And Henricus, boyishly forgetful of our awful quandary, smiled with delight at the remembrance. "But when I got to the dust-pits," he continued, "there was nobody there. And after I had waited awhile, a strange man turned up, and informed me that the carter had just cut his foot, and so had sent him, his brother-in-law, to discharge his duties. I jumped off at once, without a word, for it seemed to me that the man looked at me suspiciously, and I did not know what the carter had told him. I went home, washed and dressed, and repaired to The Grove to enjoy my triumph.

Then I returned, went straight to bed, and I have already told you all the rest."

"But now, Henricus," I cried, "what about that money?"

"What money?" he asked, quite innocently.

"Why, the money you said you had brought from Schrader," I explained. "As you say you took nothing from him, where did that come from?"

Henricus sprang up with a hearty laugh.

"That money!" he echoed. "Pshaw! that was my own. After Schrader's offer had reminded me of your requirement, I thought you might be willing to take the loan from me, as a friend, without any interest at all. But you were both so high and mighty that I funked explaining my little plot. There won't be any trouble over that money anyhow. The Bank knows I drew it yesterday morning just before I left the Fort."

Here was mystery with a vengeance! Only one thing was quite clear—and we had decided on that even before Joseph Diaz arrived and insisted on it—the police must be told that old Schrader's head was in Mrs. Janz' pickle-jar.

Poor Henricus! his holiday had a melancholy termination, for he spent the rest of it "under arrest." We did our best to bail him out, but all our efforts were of no avail. The police would not hear of letting him out of their clutches. It seemed to them that they had seldom caught a criminal so red-handed! And there was another mystery on hand in the continued disappearance of the child who had lived with Schrader, and had been championed by Henricus.

The total disappearance of old Schrader's body and of the starveling child were two elements of persisting bewilderment.

Joseph Diaz paid the incarcerated Henricus long visits, going carefully over every detail of his story. Reeves, old Schrader's nephew, steadily adhered to the bald details he had first narrated. When he was asked as to Henricus's evening visit to the miser, he at once admitted it, corroborating Henricus's own account, and confessing that when he was disturbed in the night, he at first thought he was dreaming of the recent row; and next, that the miser's censor had returned to the charge; in which case, said Reeves, he had felt little disposed to interrupt him, since he was thankful for any stranger's intervention between his uncle and the victim of his avaricious cruelty.

In the light of subsequent events, it puzzles me to think how certain questions were not asked, and certain inquiries strenuously pushed. I think at first we felt it too absurd to suspect Henricus, and afterwards we got into a panic lest we should not be able to defend him.

He was standing in very real peril when John Janz' mother appeared on the scene.

She was Henricus's godmother, and, unlike many who stand in that

relation, had sedulously done her duty by him. She had whipped him, taught him his catechism, tipped him, lectured him, and loved him!

Mrs. Janz was a Burgher lady of the good old school—usually taking the air in a carriage, and, on the rare occasions when she walked for a few steps, sporting a green silk parasol to screen her powdered face; and she had never covered her head with hat or bonnet, or aught else, which would conceal her masses of elaborately plaited hair. This she wore done up behind in a large knot enclosed in a fine white silk net kept in position by a magnificent tortoise-shell comb, while above each ear were shield-like coils of hair, skewered by large silver pins with heads of filigree work. She wore short skirts spread over a huge crinoline, and displaying much white stocking. This was one of John Janz' special grievances. He was always painfully conscious of his mother's white stockings, and her comfortable feet thrust into half-slippers; *i.e.* slippers with no heel, shuffling contrivances, intolerable to anybody with pedestrian inclinations.

A queer figure was Mrs. Janz as she sat in our verandah, her green umbrella lying beside her, while she solaced herself by picking cardamon seeds from a fancy-basket held in her lap, throwing them from the palm of her hand into her mouth with an adroit action, which was one of the triumphs of old-world Burgher etiquette. A very queer figure, but we were quite aware that in it we welcomed a guardian angel.

The first thing Mrs. Janz did was to insist on seeing her godson. We all tried to dissuade her, pleading that it would be "trying" for her, and all the other arguments by which men are apt to fetter the powers of useful women. Mrs. Janz waved us all off and she got her way.

She went into Henricus's apartment with a somewhat lugubrious countenance. She came out radiant.

She joined us in Joseph Diaz' garden, where he and I were strolling looking over notes, for work was more pleasant out-of-doors than within. The old lady plumped herself down under a bower of roses, and was silent. Then she looked us calmly in the face and said:

"I think you are all a parcel of geese!"

(We were accustomed to Mrs. Janz' frankness.)

"Has it ever occurred to your wisdom to inquire what has become of the jar I really sent?" she asked with fine sarcasm. "Have you traced the man who took charge of the dust-cart when Henricus gave it up? I thought not!"

I could see that Joseph Diaz was impressed by Mrs. Janz' remarks.

"Do you know anything about the two women who travelled from Colombo with Henricus?" she went on, witheringly. "I thought not!"

"My man is still making his inquiries," pleaded young Diaz; "if

you will dine with me to-night you shall hear the latest he has done. In the meantime good-bye;" and without another word he hastened off.

Mrs. Janz nodded behind him. "He will set his man on the scents I have pointed at," she said; "but he'll take the credit himself. Women never get justice."

In the course of the morning Mrs. Janz confided to me sundry details which she had questioned out of poor Henricus. From her point of view, it was natural that these should relate chiefly to her jar, and Henricus's journey from town. On the day of that journey she had driven from her house to the station in her own conveyance, with the jar on the seat beside her. She had herself handed it out to her "boy," and, while she chatted with Henricus, she had watched that functionary walk down the platform and deposit his burden in a carriage. She had not gone near the carriage herself, and, so far from having seen its occupants, she did not know whether or not there was anybody in it. Henricus had told her that when he got into the carriage the two women were already there, sitting one at either side of the door. The jar stood on the seat beside the one with her back to the engine. Mrs. Janz had entreated Henricus to throw his memory back over that journey and to adjudge no incident too insignificant to tell her. Henricus had evidently done his best to obey. He said he had exchanged a few civil remarks with his fellow-passengers. He had taken a seat facing the engine, and noticing that the lady opposite him looked pale and tremulous, he had suggested that it might be well for her to change her seat. She had consented, and in gathering up a shawl and one or two other trifles, she had also proceeded to lift the jar, he had thought, as if she feared it might be in danger of breakage if left on a seat by itself. Henricus had gallantly protested that she must not trouble herself about that; and to give emphasis to his words crossed over to the seat she vacated, and placed himself beside the jar. He could not say the lady seemed any better for her change of position. Both the women had alighted when he did, and John Janz and I knew the rest.

All this was duly retailed to Joseph Diaz during dinner, and directly that meal was over, the lawyer summoned his "man" Swarris, the detective.

This functionary entered the room with a profound salaam for his master and me, but on seeing Mrs. Janz he clasped both his hands together and bowed his head—a mark of respect which the natives show only to the most influential. He remained in this attitude until Joseph Diaz asked him to sit down, at the same time indicating a corner where he could best make himself comfortable.

Down he squatted in true Asiatic style. We could not offer him a chair because he was a low-caste man, and to render him that civility would have affronted and scandalised the other servants.

But Joseph Diaz ordered a glass of brandy to be brought for him, at which the old man's dusky face glowed with satisfaction, while Mrs. Janz sniffed a virtuous disapproval. The "boy" brought the glass of brandy in his hand, since Swarris' caste did not allow him to receive anything off a tray.

Taking the glass from the servant, Swarris rose and turned his face to the wall so that we should not see him drink. Hiding his mouth from us with his left hand, he gulped down the alcohol, never allowing the glass to touch his lips. That done he returned the glass to the servant, and sat down again with a grunt of satisfaction and a guilty side glance towards Mrs. Janz.

"Well," said Diaz; "have you carried out my orders?"

"Yes, saar; and plenty more too, saar," he answered.

As the old man spoke three languages, and as he would employ all three to help out his powers of expression, it will be more pleasant for the reader if I construe his conversation into English, eliminating the oaths with which he garnished it, despite the daggers which gleamed in Mrs. Janz' eyes.

From Swarris' story we gathered that Joseph Diaz had directed two arrests; at least, two had been accomplished: that of Reeves, Schrader's nephew, and the dust-cart man. But Diaz had also apparently directed the arrest of the man who had taken the dust-cart after Henricus's freak, and this man Swarris had utterly failed to find.

Both prisoners, said Swarris, were utterly astonished at their arrest, and strenuously denied any guilty knowledge of the affair.

"And is this all that you have brought us to hear?" cried Mrs. Janz, flying up from her chair.

"If the big lady will only be patient," said the little man, appealing to Mr. Diaz, "I will soon show her that I have not been idle."

"Well, do be quick about it," retorted Mrs. Janz; "for I want to get home! I have not even put up my poultry for the night; and I hear that there are jackals about."

The detective narrated that after consigning Mr. Reeves and the dustman to the police-station, his attention had been directed to two women.

Mrs. Janz was on the alert.

Said the detective, "I see them walk towards Schrader's house. I follow. They go into Schrader's garden, look about everywhere, knock at door. Then they open it and go in. Then one woman comes out again and looks about; then she go in again, and next they both come out and go towards railway-station."

"Did they take anything out of the house?" asked Mr. Diaz.

"No," said the detective. "They took a railway-ticket for W—— Station."

"Your station"—Mrs. Janz nodded to me eagerly.

We thought we had got a clue! But Swarris went on to say that

he followed the women to their destination, and found that they were two elderly maiden sisters of Mrs. Jonkless, who, interested in their sister's account of the miserable child now missing from Schrader's house, had gone over the premises to see if they could find any trace of it which might have escaped the masculine eyes of the police.

"Do you mean to say that you followed two respectable old ladies like the Miss Kauls, expecting to find them implicated in a brutal murder?" exclaimed Mrs. Janz, whose disappointment found vent in virtuous indignation.

Swarris looked at her deprecatingly. Doubtless he felt what he did not say—to wit, that had he not followed up this clue, Mrs. Janz would have been still more angry, and would have declared that nobody should have been regarded as above suspicion.

"You will be spying on me next!" fumed Mrs. Janz. "And, indeed, you have good cause, until you find my real pickle-jar!"

"Ah!" cried Swarris, with a gleam of delight, as if he should say, "Now I shall be able to please you;" and he narrated that while he was at W—— Station he had made a few inquiries of the officials there, with the result that he discovered a jar of pickles had been found in a railway carriage at the terminus on the evening of Henricus's journey. He had then gone to Mrs. Janz' own house and interviewed her "boy." The "boy" remembered accompanying his mistress with the pickle-jar; he remembered putting it into the train; he was quite sure there was nobody in the carriage at the time. He could recollect where he had put the jar: he had placed it under the seat.

"The inference is," said Joseph Diaz, "that in the interval between his doing that and Henricus entering the carriage these two women got in with another jar, whose contents they knew only too well, but which Henricus naturally assumed to be the jar in his charge. They, of course, would not know of the jar under the seat; and when Henricus calmly took possession of theirs, they, under the circumstances, must have been too terrified to protest, lest some disturbance should arise, in which the horror might have been prematurely revealed."

"The hussies were only too glad to be quit of it," decided Mrs. Janz. "I knew they were not worth much when Henricus said they were good-looking. Men always say that of the wrong sort!"

Swarris had made every effort to trace the two women, but had failed. He had visited Henricus, and got a tolerably detailed description of them from him, and he eagerly accepted everything that John Janz and I could say about them. But we had only seen them from a distance, and could not say much, though Janz declared that he thought he should know them again, unless indeed they were dressed very differently.

"Where, then, is my pickle-jar?" Mrs. Janz asked.

It was at the police-station. She and her "boy" would have to swear to its identity.

There would be no difficulty about that, said the good lady, for the date when she had made the pickles was written in her own hand on the cover. Mr. Diaz ventured a little joke about her having put Henricus into a pickle and a jar as well as given him one to carry. But she scorned such remarks, and the lawyer thought to restore her good-humour by remarking that since her godson's possession of this sinister pot was the chief point against him, there was now surely enough light on the matter to ensure Henricus being let out on bail. But this only made Mrs. Janz furious.

"Bail!" she shrieked. "Bail? Why, they should let Henri out at once, and pay him smart compensation for wrongful detention. Bail! I'd give them some bail for themselves if I had to deal with them—policemen, and lawyers, and all!"

We could only remind her that nothing more could be done that night—indeed, that nothing in this world could be so good for Henricus as the undisturbed sleep which we, who knew him best, felt quite sure he was enjoying! Then we hinted to Mrs. Janz that her carriage was waiting at the door, and that we knew she would not like her horse to get a chill!

"I suppose some day I shall be allowed to have my own way," grumbled the old lady, who, like many other people who generally have theirs, was under the delusion that she was sorely put upon by her fellow-creatures.

She went away pettishly, without wishing us good-night. But we knew her little "temper" originated in her genuine concern for Henricus. Instead of returning to John Janz' bungalow at W——I slept that night in Joseph Diaz' town-house, so as to be on the scene early next day, when, thanks to the evidence brought forward by Swarris, we did succeed in getting Henricus liberated on bail, though the charge against him was still entertained.

One singular circumstance in the mystery was the total disappearance of the miser's body! There was the head, to be sure. Was the inquest to be held upon it alone?

This was, however, what finally happened. Mrs. Janz' "boy" thereupon gave his evidence—how he had seen his mistress take the pickle-jar from the "almira," where she kept such things; how they had driven with it to the station, and he had put it beneath the seat of an empty carriage.

Mrs. Janz identified the pickle-jar which had been found unclaimed at the terminus.

The "suspect" Reeves was allowed as a witness. He admitted having heard old Schrader moving about after Henricus had gone away—or at least after he believed he had gone.

The dust-cart man was another witness. Joseph Diaz cross-examined him.

"Did you go to Schrader's late on the evening of the murder?"

"Yes."

"At whose request?"

"At Mr. Reeves'."

"Was it only rubbish which you removed?"

"Only rubbish—stuff from the garden."

"After you left Schrader's house where did you go?"

"Straight to Mr. Henricus's house, but I found him coming on the road to meet me, and I gave him charge of the cart."

"You say that then you hurt your foot, and could not go to the dusthole to take over the cart as you had promised. Whom, then, did you send?"

"A stranger who had been staying at the '*boutique*,' near my house. I have not seen him since."

This statement was accepted as fact. There was a *boutique* near the carter's house—an eating-house greatly frequented by native tramps.

No trace had been found of the missing child, or of Henricus's two female fellow-travellers. The police bore witness to their own search or the body of the murdered man. The dusthole had been emptied and carefully examined; but no disturbance of the earth, such as would be necessary to secrete a considerable bulk, could be discovered.

The coroner's jury brought in a verdict of "Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown;" and the three "suspects," Henricus, Reeves, and the dust-cart man, were all alike set at liberty, and all alike, alas! not "without a stain on their characters."

Now, before his own arrest, Reeves had made himself very active in all the proceedings, and had been very loud and indignant in the lamentations he made over the cruel murder of his poor dear uncle. Immediately after the inquest, I was called away up country on business, and it was only on my return that I learned from John Janz of the strange change now wrought on the face of circumstances.

"Some of us have been thriving during your absence," said John mysteriously. "The dust-cart man's nerves got such a shock over the inquest that he had to give up his place. But now he grows water grass, sells vegetables, has a cart of his own, and beats his wife regularly!"

"Dear me!" I answered; "what is that you insinuate?"

"Well," said Janz, with assumed nonchalance, "we've got some new neighbours near our bungalow. Two ladies. They live quietly, but comfortably; very! They have one regular visitor, and that is—Mr. Reeves!"

"Oh, I think I see the milk in the cocoa-nut now," I responded.

"And, as for the police," Janz went on, "they've changed their opinion—some of them who most misdoubted Reeves. They say he was a maligned man! I notice one or two of them have got fine new horses."

John put the last sentence into a very effective stage "aside."

"Have they ever found Schrader's body?" I asked.

"Not a trace of it," answered John; "nor a word of the child."

"Do you ever see Swarris?" I inquired. "Surely he is staunch."

"Yes," said John: "but he must not come near us just now, or else we should arouse suspicions that he is still working on the case—as he is."

A few nights later, however, Swarris did turn up. He came to see me. I was a comparative stranger in the place—a born European, and Swarris wanted me to return to town with him and sleep in his hut, and repair with him to the dusthole at daybreak. In the ordinary course of things, it was to be once more empty, and Swarris wished to seize the opportunity for a final search, and he sought my assistance that we might make the most of the time, while my appearance, if observed, might not be connected with the Schrader affair. I put myself entirely at the disposal of the old man.

After early refreshment of hot coffee and rice cakes, we started off. I could not understand why the tools with which Swarris armed us should be crowbars; but I soon knew.

We reached the plot, and Swarris went to one end and I to the other. We began our operations. Through the still air of the morning not a sound was heard, save the dull thud of the crowbars.

Our object was to pierce every foot of ground to satisfy ourselves that no hole of even moderate dimensions had been dug.

It was exhausting labour. For the soil was hard clay, and it required a vigorous stroke of the crowbar to pierce to a reasonable depth. I was beginning to get very tired and disheartened, when Swarris suddenly said that it was getting late, and we must depart, though we might come back to-morrow.

"Here goes, then, once more!" I cried; and as I did so, I wielded the crowbar with all my strength. Lo, the heavy dump was followed by a great crack, and I found myself on my knees, my hands touching the soil—for the crowbar had almost disappeared into the earth!

I called Swarris, and we both eagerly set about throwing up the earth around the spot. We came upon a board. This we removed, and behold, there was the headless body of old Schrader!

By noon the whole city was aware of the discovery. But the person who could not be found was the very one to whom everybody desired to convey the information—the dead miser's nephew, Reeves!

In a state of abject terror at the find on his former domain, the dustman, lest he should be accused of the whole, confessed his share in the crime. According to him, on the morning of the murder Reeves had called at his house and requested his aid in secretly removing some furniture from old Schrader's. There was nothing remarkable in this transaction—it had often been done before. Before he did this, however, he had met Henricus, and been induced by him to give him the temporary charge of the cart on his return

journey. The dustman had then gone on to Schrader's house, where he saw Reeves and two women. Reeves had volunteered to load the cart himself, and had sent the dustman away. When the dustman returned, he had noticed the cart contained garden rubbish, and he thought Reeves must have disposed of the furniture in the interval. Reeves came out and talked to him, and said that if he would take the cart on its usual round, Reeves himself would meet the cart at the dusthole, and let the dustman away for a holiday. The dustman thought Reeves had some more business he wished to transact privately. Then he suddenly remembered the arrangement he had made with Mr. Henricus. When he explained this to Reeves, Reeves was at first very angry, but presently he calmed down, on the women's suggesting that if he disguised himself carefully, he could take over the cart with no fear of detection, since Henricus would surely be too much occupied with his own freak to take particular notice of an unknown dustman. The dustman had accordingly delivered over his cart to Henricus, and then gone straight home and stayed there. Next morning, before he had even heard of the murder, one of the women called at his place and gave him a large sum of money, telling him he would soon know what it was for, and there would be plenty more if he showed himself a sensible man. When he heard of the murder, he knew what all the mystery was. But he was deep in Reeves' debt. Reeves had never since pressed for his money, but, on the contrary, had regularly sent him a monthly present.

The two women confessed to having helped in the disposal of the body. Notwithstanding their good looks and stylish dresses, they were two miserable creatures, mere tools of the vice and violence of the villain Reeves. They had arrived in Schrader's house only after the miser was dead—at least so they declared. It was they who originated the idea of removing the head in a jar, as they thought that would lessen the chances of identification. Their plan had been to take it to W——, and get rid of it on the sea-shore. They had got into an empty carriage, little dreaming that another jar almost identical in appearance was already under one of the seats. Henricus's coolly taking possession of that which they knew held so terrible a secret, had mystified them, shaken their nerves, and scattered their wits.

Reeves was never seen again alive. A week after the discovery of old Schrader's body, old Manika, the wife of the toll-keeper at the bridge of boats, finding her stock of fuel running short, went one morning to collect some of the wood which constantly floats down the river, and is arrested by the boats which support the bridge. Entangled among the wood, she found the mangled and unrecognisable body of a man. Horrified whispers reported that this explained the end of the murderer, who would have let the innocent suffer rather than reveal his crime.

The two women spent the greater portion of their remaining days in making coir rope in one of the local prisons. The dust-cart man,

as a convict, helped in the building of the noble breakwater which encloses the grand harbour of Colombo.

It was months afterwards when an old native woman, leading a little boy by the hand, presented herself at the house of worthy Mrs. Jonkless. The child flew into the open arms of the old neighbour who had always been kind to him. It was the orphan who had so mysteriously disappeared from the Schrader household. Within an hour or two of the murder, Reeves had expeditiously and secretly despatched him to a remote village, whose inhabitants were little likely to hear of anything going on in or near the capital. For a long time the old woman who took charge of the boy had received sums of money, from whom she knew not. With the death of Reeves, and the imprisonment of his confederates, these, of course, had ceased, and then, acting on information received from the little lad himself, the old dame brought him back to the scenes of his miserable early life.

It transpired that he was the orphan grandchild of an old friend of Schrader's. This friend had lived in the up-hill country, and had known nothing of the bad character or the great wealth which the miser had gradually—and simultaneously—acquired. Believing Schrader to be an honest hard-working man, this friend had made him guardian of the orphan child, and administrator of his own fortune.

So the poor little waif became an affluent lad, passing through the "forms" of the Royal College, and spending his holidays with Mrs. Jonkless and Mrs. Janz. As for the latter lady, we may safely say she lived "happy ever after," since she never again lacked a grievance, for whenever a fresh one failed, she returned to that which was perennial—the bitter injustice which rendered no compensation to her beloved godson Henricus for the insult and torture of the suspicions to which he had been subjected. That injustice gave her ample excuse henceforth to "spoil" Henricus in every way she could think of; such excuse being always specially dear to those worthy souls who—without it—would be compelled by their consciences to be didactic and disciplinary!

OSMAN:

AN INTERLUDE.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Letters from Majorca," "The Bretons at Home," etc., etc.

THE reality certainly exceeded all one had ever imagined in the way of moonlight scenes. We stood on one of the highest minarets in this City of the Dead. A profound silence and stillness reigned. The voice of the Muezzin had long ceased to echo through the startled air; nay, ere many hours, he would once more send forth his warning, and bid the faithful arise and worship and give thanks for the dawn of a new day. "Prayer is better than sleep! Allah! Allah! There is no God but God."

The thoroughfares below us were in darkness. No lights gleamed here and there as in a city of the living. What need of light in this city of the dead? No movement disturbed the solemn repose; no voice ascended, no footstep echoed through the lengthy corridors and spacious courts. We were alone, at midnight, amidst the Tombs of the Caliphs.

In the sky above us a full moon was riding with inconceivable majesty. We watched her silent course as she ascended high and higher yet, flooding the earth with her pale, silvery light. All was changed by this magic light into a new world.

A more poetical scene could not exist. The Tombs of the Caliphs were at our feet. Below those great domes the Mameluke Sultans

for centuries had been sleeping their last long sleep. No colossal pyramids, indestructible as time itself, had been erected for them, yet they slept as safely and soundly as those whose monuments had been the work of a lifetime. From our standpoint we traced the outlines of domes and minarets, of courts and pillared quadrangles, as clearly as at midday.

But the effect was far different, more enchanting, more in harmony with the spirit of the place. The lights and shadows were deep and distinct, but cold and lifeless. The whole world around us was refined and beautified. Crumbling ruins, touched by the pale moonlight, were ruins no longer, but exquisite monuments destined to last for ever. Here and there the light fell upon the windows of a mosque tomb, where a Mameluke Sultan reposed in his well-kept sarcophagus: a regal chamber of the dead given to few. The moonbeams showed up the windows with cold but exquisite effect. The interior might have been illumined with ghostly torches: the pale, subdued rays of a dim religious light: the very light for a requiem. A solemn service might have been going forward; a service for the sleeping dead, with all the Mohammedan ritual; all the strange gestures and ceremonial prescribed by the False Prophet. The exquisite music, the inspired Liturgy of our own service, drawing the soul upwards, and bringing with them conviction and consolation—all was wanting. The Mohammedans know nothing of this.

Nothing could have been more wonderfully impressive. Near us uprose the Citadel; so clearly marked that from the walls we could see a solitary sentinel gazing outwards, the steel of his bayonet flashing in the moonlight. Above it the Mosque of Mohammed Ali stood out in all its grandeur of outline. At our feet, stretched Cairo itself, with its endless thoroughfares, and innumerable flat roofs: a sleeping world. All its famous mosques, with their domes and minarets, were distinctly visible. Far beyond, we seemed to catch, here and there, the flashing of the moonlight upon the windings of the sacred river. Yet beyond, so clear was the atmosphere of this Eastern night, so vivid the light thrown by the moon, we faintly traced the outlines of the Great Pyramids, and imagined the Sphinx on guard at their feet. Finally, stretching into an infinity of space invisible to us, lay the boundless desert, leading to other worlds.

To go backward a moment.

We had had a delightful evening. Osman had been more entertaining than ever; full of conversational power, full of reminiscences. A keen observer of humanity, he possessed a fund of anecdotes and recollections bearing upon the strength and weakness, the absurdities and sublimities, the contradictions of mankind. An intense lover of Nature, he had travelled the world over for his own pleasure and profit. With the aid of a retentive memory he spoke of scenes so vividly that as the words fell from his lips we saw the places described.

Old Street in Cairo,

The repast, light in character, was distinguished by all the refinement he had at his command. Egyptian dishes, which were revelations to us, he had made purposely prominent. Dark servants in rich Oriental costume served us with the quietness and ease of long training. In the centre of the table a small fountain threw up waters just sufficiently perfumed to freshen the atmosphere. Sparkling wines bubbled up in jewelled glasses: and Egyptian coffee was served to us in cups of Sèvres placed in stands of pure gold of the most exquisite filigree work.

There was a singular repose upon everything. The apartment was rich and large, costly in its decorations, faultless in taste. Works of art hung upon the walls, specimens drawn from the best European painters. Influenced probably by what Osman had told us of his magical appliances in Constantinople, every moment we seemed to fancy that the walls would recede and disappear and disclose some gorgeous scene, some gay and festive crowd. But no such startling change awaited us. Though everything about us seemed to border upon the magical, all was well without the bounds of the supernatural.

"No; I said we should have no magic here," laughed Osman in answer to a remark we had made or a glance of inquiry he had rightly interpreted. "That we must leave for other scenes than these, or for the pages of the *Arabian Nights*. The Easterns, you know, love gorgeousness and magnificence. It is born with them, and, where it can be obtained, seems as necessary to them as food and raiment. They possess a fervent imagination which is boundless in its conceptions and desires. Nature herself is their instructor. These Eastern skies in the twenty-four hours of the day will reflect all the colours of the rainbow. What can be more exquisite than the unbroken blue of our heavens, even if a little monotonous? Look at the flood of gold that is for ever poured down upon our hills and plains, painting our vegetation with the most vivid and flaming tints, giving our houses and monuments a dazzling glow, an indescribable warmth. We are steeped in colours, which, evident as they are, can never be vulgar, for they are the handiwork of Nature. It is well that the Easterns have this imagination, which is the heritage of all, not merely of the great or favoured few. True, it makes life more or less of a dream; an illusion; a will-o'-the-wisp for ever goes before them luring them on to green pastures and longed-for oases; hope is strong and for ever holds out enchanting promises. They are always about to grasp happiness; and in the pursuit of the phantom actually possess something of the reality. A false life, and unwholesome, some would say; but I hardly think so. It leads to no evil, it checks no efforts; whilst their imagination adds to their religious fervour, and more often than you would imagine to their self-restraint. If they live in a fool's paradise, where is the harm? When old age comes upon them, hope dies and imagination has lost its fervency; illusions are over; the paradise of this world

Blind Beggar in Streets of Cairo.

has proved a mockery; but they are then so near the paradise of the next that they can bear the disappointment. And now, as it grows late, let us go to our true magic of the evening: our Tombs of the Caliphs, our City of the Dead, bathed in the light of that dead world which still exists for our benefit. If mankind would only learn a lesson from the economy of Nature!"

At this moment, a dark Oriental servant, who had not before entered the room, appeared, and, advancing towards Osman with an Eastern salutation, spoke a few words in Arabic.

"The carriage waits to conduct us to fairyland," cried our host. "We are ready. I have no need to ask, *Is it moonlight?* That is an anxiety unknown to Orientals. Here the clouded exceptions are so rare that we think of them only when they come. And now for our magic."

We passed out into a silvery world. A flood of pure white light threw its calm but ghostly influence upon all around. Every object was brought out distinctly, but softened and refined. The streets of Cairo were silent and abandoned, and but for the moon would have been in darkness. Only here and there did some poor Egyptian, with flowing abba and noiseless step, flit past like a phantom, drawing his scanty garments closer to him. He found the night air chilly, whilst to us it was balmy and refreshing. Not that the nights are always so, even in this favoured clime; there are times when the clear night atmosphere falls to a degree which reminds a European of his own colder regions. But whilst this means almost an added pleasure to him, to the Egyptian it means absolute pain and suffering. The climate has changed in Europe; cold and discomfort are no longer unknown in the regions of the Riviera, the sunny islands of the Levant, the relaxing shores of Algeria; who, then, can tell how soon Egypt itself may cease to be a land where we may escape winter?

As we turned into the Mouski and passed up the long narrow thoroughfare, the contrast between the day and night scene was startling.

The restless, ever-shifting crowd had disappeared; not one was left to tell the tale. The moon threw deep lights and shadows upon street and houses. Here and there a solitary dog was hunting for its supper, now and then stopping to look at its shadow as if it were something that had no business to be there. Outside some of the doorways, a Fellah was stretched on a rough sort of bed, curled up into what looked like a bundle of linen, in this way guarding his master's premises like a faithful hound. It was curious to see them, and one realised how little of this world's favours contents them. Their mind might well be a continual feast, though probably it is only resignation to the inevitable which makes them so enduring, and comparatively happy.

No need of outrunners to-night. The Mosque of Hassan, as we passed, looked wonderfully imposing. Its huge doorway was in

SAÏS RUNNING BEFORE A CARRIAGE.

shadow; all was closed and silent; its great courts within were deserted, and we pictured to ourselves the deep shadows of the pillars cast by the moonlight across the sacred pavement.

The incompleted Mosque opposite stood out as a beautiful object in semi-ruin. Wide and deserted looked the Place Roomeleh as we turned into it out of the narrower thoroughfare. All the picturesque groups had taken flight. Men, camels, and stalls—everything had departed. Empty space, solemn silence, brilliant moonlight showing up the very stones; a pale, cold, pure effect, out of which uprose the wonderful dome and minarets of the Mosque of Hassan, outlined in majesty and grandeur against the dark night sky: the moonlight throwing all into the most vivid lights and shadows. Above us rose the Citadel also, with the Mosque of Mohammed Ali, which, seeming to touch the skies, looked a celestial vision.

And then we passed into the regions of the Tombs of the Caliphs, leaving the carriage where we had left it in the morning.

No danger of the night wind injuring the horses, or causing discomfort to the waiting servants. They might sleep away the hours without fear of ill. The midnight air breathes no fever; the horses were too well trained to move. We found ourselves in this City of the Dead, sole representatives of the living. Our shadows fell upon the pale uneven thoroughfares, mingling with other shadows cast by broken walls and silent tombs, by lofty domes and slender minarets. A silence of death reigned everywhere. Nor distant jackal, nor hooded owl—night's shrieking harbinger—disturbed the utter stillness. A City of the Dead: a Dead City—the words meant so much to-night—were so vividly realised.

Presently we reached a particular minaret, and in the shadow of the doorway stood a ghostly object.

We started at the first instant; for our minds, filled with thoughts of Death and the Unseen, almost looked upon this apparition as a visitant from the land of shadows. Osman, interpreting the movement, touched our arm and smiled, enjoying our momentary surprise. We were evidently expected. The ghostly custodian, with a reverence ghost never yet assumed, silently opened the door. We passed through to the staircase: without sound the door closed again; a glimmering light, cast one knew not how or whence, faintly guided our steps; the ghostly custodian disappeared; no word had been uttered. Finally we found ourselves at the goal of our desires—the balcony running round the summit of the minaret.

Of the view that met our gaze we have already spoken.

All that was beautiful in night and Nature was there. The scene was the very essence of poetry; and the effect was immeasurably heightened when we remembered that what we looked upon was almost holy ground: the Land of Egypt. Perhaps the very spot on which our minaret stood had been trodden by the Holy Family in their flight. They must at least have passed near to it. We can imagine the

emotions of Joseph as he guided the ass on which sat his wife and the young Child. We know how full of mystery the whole drama must have been to his simple and unlearned mind: for he was only a carpenter. But his faith seems to have been as strong and trusting as that of Abraham. He was warned of God in a dream; that was sufficient; he went forward nothing doubting. The Virgin probably was vouchsafed a supernatural strength; and as far as was necessary, a revelation even beyond that announced to her by the Angel. Otherwise her human nature could scarcely have borne the sense of mystery, the strange incomprehensible events, of which she was the centre, and which were altogether beyond her understanding. She could only look on with awe, and dimly feel the greatness and majesty of her charge. Then, as to-night, the stars must have shone mysteriously in the dark canopy above them, the moon have given them her light.

In those days there were no Tombs of the Caliphs, no Modern Cairo, no Citadel. All this did not arise for centuries after. But there were the Pyramids, which had already existed for thousands of years: and at their base this Holy Family may have paused to take refuge from a sandstorm, or shelter from the noonday sun. And there the sacred river ran as it runs to-day. To the main features of the landscape the rolling centuries had brought no change.

To-night we saw it all softened by this wonderful flood of moonlight. Everything immediately around us was subdued to that veiled and shadowy outline which is the height of beauty and poetry in a landscape. Imagination at once takes up her work, and endows the scene with all the charms, all the romance and perfection that might be there; that often are there; certainly were there to-night. We gazed in silence and wonder. Osman, more intent upon charming us than pleasing himself, keenly enjoyed our recognition of the magic he had promised us.

"What did I say?" he cried at length, in tones hardly above a whisper, yet far reaching in that wonderful air, that intense quietness. "Have I kept my word? Does not for once reality exceed anticipation? Could anything be more wonderful, more unearthly than this? Can you believe that it is the same scene on which we were gazing twelve hours ago? You who have seen the Alhambra by moonlight, have looked upon sleeping Granada at its feet, the wide plains of the Nevada beyond, the distant chain of snow mountains, have listened to the silvery irrigation bells of the valleys—was it all superior or even equal to this? There you had no City of the Dead to thrill you with its silence and mystery and sadness. All of death there was an historic past, matchless in point of interest as far as it goes, but falling short of the element which appeals most to the soul—the mystery of our passage through the Dark Valley. Here everything reminds us of this: we seem to be at its very portals. Here the living have moved in crowds, but all have passed away. It is an abandoned spot,

where the wild beasts of the forest might almost take refuge as from the haunts of men. And all about us lie the dead who once were great and powerful and feared. Under almost every dome sleeps a warrior who was a man of valour and a king. But the mighty are fallen; Time's devastating dust is all that remains of their glory: that and a tradition. Look at those crumbling walls, so refined by the moonlight; are they not pictures of infinite beauty? See those wonderful domes and minarets so distinctly outlined against the dark sky. They almost seem endowed with speech, so evident, so forcible is the tale they tell. What a vast expanse it all appears under the moonbeams! How unutterable is the deathlike silence! Not a bird disturbs the air; not a leaf seems to whisper in yonder trees. Mark those courts and quadrangles; the mysterious shadows cast by the pillars, where the moonlight touches them; those silent fountains, dried up and neglected, where once the faithful washed before they worshipped. How cold and dead it all lies under the moonlight, how silent and solitary and forlorn! What a true Dead City!"

We felt all and more than all he uttered with so much delight and enthusiasm. It was an experience we would not have missed, and it was due to Osman alone that we were there. Perhaps no one else in that vast city had stood at this witching hour where we now found ourselves. No one thought of these things, few cared for them. Poetry and romance are dying out under the pressure of realities. Time has become too short for what has to be done, and dreams, even the most charming, must be set aside.

For a time we were silent, gazing upon the matchless scene, each occupied with his own thoughts; each profoundly influenced in his own way.

To us it was a new world and a new experience, calling up a chain of emotions hitherto unborn; to Osman it was merely adding a link to a chain he had been forging more or less all his lifetime: the study of Nature, the contemplation of the beautiful; an earnest search after the sublime, all that elevates and is sacred. It found its reflection in his countenance; these influences always do; and to look into the clear depths of his eyes was to see the unmistakable evidence of a soul pure and untainted: he was of those who keep themselves unspotted from the world.

And yet few lived more essentially in the world than he.

Also, he saw all sides of human nature. Too often he had to discover that the motives which influence men are ignoble and self-interested. He had to play the part of a diplomatist, which is so frequently to say one thing and mean another; to shield thoughts and intentions behind an ambiguity of speech, which long indulged in at last distorts the mind, and brings about an obliquity of the moral vision. At length it is purposely cultivated and becomes a fine art to the possessor. Machiavel was wont to say that up to the age of discretion and independence, he was singularly frank and open

A Kawas.

abhorred equivocation; but finding that truth and candour made him enemies and retarded his social advancement, he began little by little to conceal his thoughts, until he ended in being one of the most accomplished deceivers of his or of any age. Vagueness and falsehood became more natural to him than directness and truth. He delighted in mystifying his audience. He felt that it was a power, and it became his second nature. But the soil must have been there in the first instance ready to receive the seeds of deception which he sowed.

It was never so with Osman.

He had steered clear of the worst faults of a political and diplomatic life. Under any circumstances it would have been the same; there are natures in the world who can no more stifle conscience or turn aside from the straight path, than the earth can cease to turn or the sun to shine. Of these was Osman. But he had begun life under singularly favourable circumstances. His father had been great before him. He was brought up in the very atmosphere of the diplomatic world, of court life. Especially truthful from childhood, and singularly observant, he had been present when a young boy at many an informal cabinet-council in his father's house: for the father, greatly attached to his son, loved to have him about him at all times and seasons. Quiet, apparently absorbed in study, seated apart, the boy would hear and inwardly digest many things that seemed entirely beyond his years and comprehension. If his father quitted the room for a moment, leaving two councillors together, he would often hear things said in direct opposition to what had gone before, sometimes meaning treason to the absent host. Such treachery, only too often taken for granted by those of riper years, awoke anger and revolt in his young and earnest mind. He determined that if in after-life diplomacy should be his lot, it should never be at the sacrifice of conscience and principle.

And he had kept his resolution. After-familiarity with the crooked ways of life had not created in him indifference to them. Familiarity never bred contempt. It is understood that he did not wear his heart upon his sleeve, or turn to his opponents the faces of the cards he held; with the harmlessness of the dove had to be combined the wisdom of the serpent; the misfortune is that the combination too often part company, and the dove takes her flight; but Osman had kept his uprightness through the most dangerous and trying period of life, and he would not fail now.

We have said that he was singularly favoured; his lines had been cast in pleasant places. Of princely fortune, of the highest birth, a friend of the most exalted personages of more than one realm, he was at all times above the frowns and smiles of fortune. Higher rank he could not gain, and of wealth he had more than abundance. He was the only child of his father, a man of clear judgment and vast powers of mind, who had added to his already great wealth by

NIGHT ON THE EGYPTIAN SHORES.

successful speculations, for the most part known only to himself and his agents.

All this Osman had inherited. He had stepped into his place in life, when ready for it, naturally and without effort.

His father's idol and companion, he had had from the commencement the full benefit of matured wisdom and experience, poured out upon his receptive faculties without stint or reservation, with all the unfailing charm and power inseparable from intense affection. It had been everything to him. The impulse and enthusiasm of early days, often leading, in others, to failure and mistake, were counteracted by his father's wisdom.

When the day came—as it comes to all—that he had to walk alone and his father had passed out of this life, he had gained the wisdom necessary to the emergency. His judgment and discretion became so well known, so relied on, that they became proverbial. He could do and dare what many others never dreamed of attempting. Where his sense of right did not accompany the matter to be arranged or carried through, he invariably withdrew, and neither the assumed displeasure of his sovereign nor the persuasions of his friends ever moved him. The consequence was that in the end they turned to him ever with greater favour, more enduring esteem.

The death of his father was the second great sorrow of his life. Yet we have seen, in one of our earlier chapters, how widely they differed from each other.

Both had the same strong sense of integrity and uprightness: Osman had only inherited this: both were gifted with intellects of unusual power; but whilst the one was all prose, the accomplished diplomatist, the finished courtier, with sympathies only for his office and order, the other, at heart, was all poetry.

Osman, in a less active sphere of life, would have been a writer of romances, as he had ever been a devourer of them. He was intimately acquainted with the best fiction and poetry of all countries, and could read all fluently in the original. Shakespeare he knew better than ourselves, and Scott not less well. Homer had been his constant companion, and he could quote page after page of the lighter but elegant and flowing Dante. The musical Italian syllables that fell from his lips were clear and pure as Dante himself could have uttered them. His French—greatest test of all—was perfect; in his English he was seldom at fault.

In his boyhood, his father—to whom, if romance and poetry meant nothing, intellect and culture were everything—had closely watched his training and education. In that one point alone he was firm almost to severity—the boy must never shirk his allotted tasks. A tutor from four of the representative countries of Europe lived in the palace, and a certain portion of every day had to be spent in study with each, from the time he was ten years old. He grew up

intimately familiar with four languages besides his own. Happily his brain was equal to the strain.

But he had long hours of relaxation. Frequently his father would take him away for a week at a time on short excursions, when work was abandoned and the youthful mind was allowed to relax its discipline and lie fallow—only to take up its tasks again with renewed zeal. Study came to him naturally and without trouble; his mind was both retentive and recollective: and whilst most minds possess one of these essential faculties, few are gifted with both. His memory was admirable, and in every possible way had been cultivated and strengthened by early training.

The delight he took in his father's companionship was singular, considering their differences of taste.

In no way did the father minister to the romantic side of his son's nature. One recreation in common they had: both were unusually good chess-players, and many of their leisure hours, year after year, were spent in this lordly and most intellectual of games. They were well matched, but the father was the stronger of the two, as he was the greater diplomatist.

Then when the battle was over, the father would take up an abstruse work on political economy, the life of some great statesman, or the history of some fallen country. In all cases he would find out the weak spot in the armour; and without self-conceit or pride of intellect would say, and say truly: "Had I been there, the course of the world would have been altered." He possessed the self-confidence of all really great men, unalloyed by self-consciousness. One fault he had: a certain hardness of nature which so often accompanies those who have large experience of human nature and have to see it from many sides. He had no pity for failure, and he was absolutely merciless upon fraud.

But the son, the chess game ended, the battle lost and won, instead of taking up a work on *The Economy of Power*, *The Fate of Nations*, or *The Influence of Purpose*, would fly to a romance or a poem and completely lose himself in the world of imagination. It did not please his father, but he was wise enough to allow a son so obedient in all essential matters to follow the bent of his nature in his recreations.

Osman had inherited his romantic disposition, his love of poetry, his intense appreciation of the beauties of Nature, from his mother.

She had been a Greek, the daughter of one of the chief families of that fallen but ever interesting country. Lovely as a vision, and pure and good as she was beautiful, she had met Osman the elder at the age of eighteen. He fell passionately in love with her. If ever sentiment and romance awoke within him, it was for the brief period of their wedded life; for in spite of opposition, of differences of religion, he overcame all obstacles with his accustomed power, and they were married. To his credit be it recorded, that though the

laws of his country permitted it, he never had any other wife, and after her death was true to her memory, and remained a widower.

"And for this alone," said Osman, in one of our many conversations, the tears of emotion in his voice—"for this alone, if for nothing else, my father will ever dwell in my heart as the prince and king of all men I have ever known. But I do not wonder at his devotion. Though I was only ten years old when my mother died, I remember her as distinctly as though it had been yesterday: remember her as the best and loveliest of women. Our household was not like an Eastern household, nor was it governed by any of the foolish laws of the country. My father, with his accustomed independence of character, his contempt for all rules and regulations that did not harmonize with his views, threw conventionalities to the wind, and became a law unto himself. When he married it was understood that for his wife there should be no harem, no dwelling within circumscribed limits, no disguising head-dresses. She was to be free to follow her own religion; free to come and go where she would and when she would. She dressed as she pleased, and received her husband's guests just as any other European lady would have done.

"You must remember that my father was in a position second to none—his sovereign excepted. The only singular result was that his example did not create a revolution in our senseless manners and customs. The men who came to our house were charmed and fascinated by the graceful and gracious lady who took the lead at her husband's receptions, and by her tact and influence brought out all that was best in them, and made them feel themselves better men than they were. For what is so elevating as to come into familiar contact with a good and beautiful woman? But few have the courage or even the desire to bring about reforms. Nothing is stronger than tradition, and laws are less binding than habits. When they came of an evening, my mother would often sing and play and charm them into forgetting time and place and the fever of politics. They would lose themselves in the world of melody. She excelled in both accomplishments. Her voice was one of the sweetest ever heard, and she threw into it all the poetry and purity of her nature. Had she been of humbler birth, she might have become one of the stars of earth. A less trying fate was reserved for her. For ten years she reigned the idol of my father's heart, the queen of his home. For ten years there was such happiness in that house as few have ever known, as never lasts for any. It is not too much to say that my father dwelt in an earthly paradise. Then came the end, and that lovely voice was summoned to join the celestial choir; that pure and perfect soul was taken to a world where she would find more souls in unison with her own."

He paused a moment. His eyes looked far away into space. Even now the recollection of scenes long past profoundly affected

CAIRO FROM THE NILE.

him, but the emotion was mental. The time had gone by for the outward and visible signs of grief.

He continued :

"I remember it well. The night before there had been one of my father's many assemblies. I need not say that only men were present. My mother reigned alone, as she ever did. Shielded by my father's power and attention, she never felt herself awkwardly placed. From the very rarity of the experience, my father's guests ever treated her with profound veneration. It was, indeed, not less than they felt for her.

"She had charmed them with her singing and playing. She was unusually brilliant that night, and my father has told me that she felt strangely and peculiarly happy. More than once she had whispered to herself during the evening: 'This unspeakable, unusual emotion that I feel—what is it? Can such happiness last? Is something about to happen?' What are these moods which come over us all at times when some great change is about to take place; this shadow that is cast before a coming event; these presentiments or premonitions which might be taken as warnings, yet are seldom heeded?

"That night, singularly to relate, I had been allowed to sit up until the very end of the evening. Buried with a book in a distant arm-chair, from which I could see and hear everything, yet attracted no attention, for once my father seemed to have forgotten my existence. It was always he who gave the signal for my departure.

"When all was over, and the last guest had left, and a silence had fallen upon the immense rooms, I remember seeing my mother suddenly cross to my father, and, placing her head upon his breast and a hand upon each shoulder, whisper forth that she was full of a strange happiness, a strange presentiment. To which he replied that she had never been dearer to him than at that moment, never more brilliant in voice and mind than on that evening, and—it had struck him more than once—never so lovely. Hers was indeed a loveliness not only material, but spiritual. Then he suddenly caught sight of me in my far-off corner, and started with awakened memory. 'Past midnight and yet up!' he cried. 'Where have my thoughts been?'

"Where indeed? Do these things happen by chance? Is not the smallest event of life under the direction of that Providence that shapes our ends? Was this unusual oversight of my father's not specially designed in order that I might have the recollection of that night for the whole of my after-life? It has never left me. In many a sad hour it has consoled me as no other thought or recollection could have done. No; these things do not happen; they are ordered. 'My darling,' cried my mother, 'you have lost your beauty sleep. To-morrow we shall see languid movements and heavy eyes.' Then turning to the volume I still held in my hand, she smiled to see that it was a romance: literature so much after her own glowing heart and imaginative mind. I was the idol of

TOMB-MOSQUE OF BARKOOK.

both their hearts; a link binding them to each other more firmly and closely, if anything could make that possible.

"The next morning my mother heard of a terrible case of misery and distress in a family in which she was much interested. Only the European ladies in the capital occupied themselves at all in visiting the poor. Things are not altogether with us as they are with you. Ought not the presentiment of the previous night have warned her of danger? But presentiments seldom avert the calamities they foreshadow. She went, nothing doubting. Possibly she had forgotten last night's experiences, or they never recurred to her until it was too late.

"It was a poor house in a wretched quarter of the town. Accompanied by her personal attendant, my mother passed swiftly down the narrow thoroughfare—a ministering angel. Refuse heaps lay about, and starving dogs raked up the seeds of malaria. Arrived at the house, she climbed the narrow staircase to her destination; her attendant following closely. Her mission fulfilled, she departed; but now the shadow that followed her was double. Death accompanied her steps. Though she knew it not at the time, a malignant fever raged in one of the rooms of that poverty-stricken den, and in less than a fortnight the earthly presence of my mother had left us for ever; her spirit had fled to heaven. The attendant escaped. The life so full, so complete, so valuable, so necessary, was taken; the other life, with no claims, no ties on earth, nor wife to miss a vacant chair, no child to look for its return, was spared.

"I was too young at the time to realise the full extent of my loss: but I was not too young to feel the keenest and most poignant sorrow. Day after day I went mourning, passing through room after room made familiar with her presence in the days which were never to return, and which her spirit still seemed to haunt; and night after night, for many a long month, I cried myself to sleep. You will say this was strange tenacity in a child of ten, but both naturally and by training I was years older than my age. I could not feel more deeply now in many ways than I felt then. Perhaps, indeed, it is the other way. Manhood is strong to bear, and those who have suffered much, as they grow older suffer less. It is a truism that to have suffered acutely is in a measure not to be able to suffer again."

"And your father?" we asked.

"My father?" returned Osman. "I scarcely know *how* it affected him. No one ever knew. For a whole week after the funeral he shut himself into his own apartments. No one saw him. His meals were taken to an ante-room, and his days were passed in a small study that no one presumed to approach. At the end of that week he came forth again to the world, so changed that many would not have known him. His cheeks were hollow and his eyes were sunken. The agony must have been overwhelming, the conflict terrible. No one ever knew what he had gone through; no one ever dared allude

to that time. As the months went on he recovered his looks, and was once more, to all appearance, himself: outwardly unchanged.

"Inwardly there was a transformation. Never inclined to sentiment, the poetry and romance of life, he grew stern, practical, devoted to his life as a diplomatist, thinking only of the wise ruling of an empire. I was the one bright spot in his horizon. He could not bear to have me under any roof but his own. Where he went, I must go also. As much as possible I became his companion. His ambition was centred in me, no less than his affection. He spared neither thought nor trouble in my training, and I owe him an eternal debt of gratitude. It is strange that, under such influences, I did not grow up hard, unpoetical, unromantic, indifferent to the beauties of Nature, the delights of art and music and antiquities: in a word, all that elevates and refines. No; the Ethiopian cannot change his skin nor the leopard his spots, and I am an example of that truth. I had inherited not only my father's nature, but my mother's. Had she been left and he taken, probably the whole course of my life would have been changed. I am, however, of those who believe that all is for the best. There is a divine ordering in the most trifling affairs of the universe, how much more in the lives of men. Perhaps," he smiled, "we should then have met for the first time on the top of Mount Parnassus, contemplating the ruins of the Acropolis, and writing verses to the glories of Ancient Greece. My life has been a more healthy one, no doubt. The hard realities of diplomacy and government have kept in check all the romantic tendencies of my nature, which might have led me into a thousand follies I have not now to regret."

Osman possessed indeed a singular combination of qualities. His mind seemed large enough to embrace many subjects, however opposed to each other they might be, so that each was in itself wholesome and intellectual.

He was gifted in a rare degree with two virtues that are too often found apart—imagination and common-sense. His judgment was far-seeing, clear, and unerring. If he had a fault, it was that he did not pause to look at a subject from an opposite point of view. His own point, however, was almost invariably correct, and it had the effect of giving him firmness, decision, and self-confidence.

His mother must indeed have been a wonderful woman, as great in her way as the husband in whose heart she reigned supreme. Her love for the beautiful and the good was not acquired; it was part of her nature, inseparable from herself. In our many conversations Osman placed before us a complete mental picture of the authors of his being. We saw them scarcely less distinctly than he himself. His graphic powers were wonderful, and he described people and places with an earnestness and a vividness we had never seen equalled. We were much together, and for our sake he prolonged his stay in Cairo: fortunately having the time at his disposal. We grew intimate, and a friendship resulted which promised to be lasting. "I know not

how it is," he one day remarked, "but though our acquaintance has been short, I have talked more freely to you, and laid bare the innermost recesses of the heart, my most sacred thoughts, as I never did to any one in my life before. I feel as if the time had never been when we were unknown to each other. I saw you on the platform at Alexandria long before you saw me. I knew you would come to my carriage and that we should travel together. It seemed to me that we had met in some previous state of existence: a doctrine in which neither you nor I are senseless enough to place any faith. Was it psychic force, or mesmeric power, or merely the intuitive recognition of similar tastes and thoughts? It was not mere accident, for you know that I do not believe in it. I can trace none of the events of my life to chance. The threads have been held and interwoven in a manner that would have been impossible had not an unseen Power guided the helm."

So it came to pass that, day by day, intimacy grew more firmly into friendship, which on one side at least was founded on esteem and admiration. It was impossible to be much with Osman without discovering how far he was above other men. The small flaws and contradictions and inequalities of character so common to most, in him were absent. His large soul could descend to nothing trivial, entertain nothing ignoble. It was no effort to him to be great. His mind was for ever soaring into the sublime regions of thought, the rose-coloured realms of imagination. And yet there was a simplicity of character about him that was singularly charming and refreshing. He had ever before him two high ideals: the remembrance of a mother who, though she died when he had not left childhood behind him, lived long enough to plant a fervent affection in his heart, and leave an unfading influence upon his mind; and a father who, though of a different mould and more contracted sympathies, still, in intellect, in unswerving integrity, and in personal influence, was a giant amongst men, and had left lasting traces on his day and generation.

Thus it was that day after day we spent many hours together; saw daylight and moonlight scenes from the same points of view. But no scene did we find fairer, more wonderful, more weird and ghostly than that midnight view from the minaret amongst the Tombs of the Caliphs: the scene with which we opened this paper, and from which insensibly we have wandered.

It was indeed, as Osman had said, a scene exceeding all the magic of earth, beyond all one's powers of imagination, mocking every attempt at description,—a veritable city of the dead, flooded with the cold, pale, brilliant moonlight, in itself an emblem of death, if compared with the warm, glorious, life-giving powers of the sun. Much of what we felt and thought had to be passed over in silence, for there are times when words are powerless, and only break the charm by which we are bound. Below us and about us were the

solemn domes marking the spots where the dead lay in their last long sleep: and we wondered how many had passed into those realms "beyond the skies," where sun and moon, and seed-time and harvest, and day and night, and winter and summer, are not; where the voice of the Muezzin is no longer heard bidding the faithful to prayer; where chance and change happeneth to no man, and the hours are not marked: because Time is swallowed up in Eternity.

CANTATA.

AROUND the Earth Moons wander;
Round Suns the Earth:
Round one great Sun all circle
In golden girth.
Pater noster qui es in cœlis.

And in these worlds which from each other shine,
Spirits unlike, yet like because divine,
Dwell loving Thee. They praise Thee—they are Thine.
Sanctificatur nomen Tuum.

He of all things possessed—
Who sole-sustained exists, approves, maintains,
And over all His works rejoicing reigns,
Desireth that His children should be blest.
Adveniat regnum Tuum.

Well—O Almighty One—
Well for these wandering spheres,
That not to them but unto Thee be given
The ordering of the years.
Fiat voluntas Tua.

Thou at whose word upsprings the golden ear,
Who dost the luscious grape with sweetness fill,
Who feedest lambs on hills—in woods the deer,
Keep back Thy storms from ear, fruit, wood, and hill.
Panem nostrum da nobis.

Far o'er the thunder's path
Immortals meet!
Let there be no more wrath;
Bid friend and foe join in communion sweet.
Remitta nobis debita.

Many ways lead unto the haven where
Life's storms are still:
Guide through the desert sands the wanderer—
Deliver us from ill!
Libera nos! Amen.

C. E. MEETKERKE.

THE STORY OF A WANDERING CROWN.

THE red walls and watch-towers of a royal palace rise on the grey cliffs above the Danube, which flows between the twin cities of Buda-Pesth, the present capital of Hungary. A Magyar soldier, in uniform rich with brown fur and gold embroidery, conducts us through vaulted corridors to the Schätzkammer, or treasury, which contains the Hungarian regalia. Collars, orders, and stars gleam with rainbow light; ropes of pearl and chains of emerald are heaped up in barbaric profusion, amid rude coronets of beaten gold and uncut jewels, which carry our thoughts back to the days of the savage Huns, whose chieftains first wore these insignia of royalty. Heavy golden bracelets and clasps, engraved with cabalistic figures or hung with Oriental charms and amulets, suggest the same train of associations.

But more precious to the loyal Magyar heart than all this *embarras de richesses*, whether of barbaric rudeness or mediæval splendour, is the ancient silver crown of Hungary—battered, dinted, and black as old iron. We gaze on it with reverential awe; for surely no crown in the world has undergone such wonderful vicissitudes.

When the royal line of Orfad became extinct, Hungary was filled with confusion. The Pope crowned one candidate; the Diet elected another, who immediately donned the coronation robes and the silver crown. His pretensions were speedily suppressed by the King of Bohemia, who surrounded the walls of Buda with his troops, and carried off both king and crown to an impregnable Bohemian fortress. Otto of Bavaria was then chosen by the Hungarians as their future ruler, on condition that he should first recover the famous crown, with which the fortunes of Hungary have ever been so closely connected.

The Bavarian prince agreed to the conditions, and, disguising himself in the garb of a merchant, he set forth on his quest and reached Bohemia in safety.

He speedily learned that the country was on the verge of ruin; war had decimated the population and exhausted the national finances. The land was untilled and the resources of the kingdom at the lowest ebb. Under these circumstances the value of the Hungarian Crown as a trophy of victory was at a discount. The misfortunes of the impoverished State and the dire necessities to which it was reduced destroyed chivalrous sentiment and national pride. The supposed merchant profited by the situation, and soon entered into such successful negotiations with the harassed and pauperised government that he was enabled to secure the possession of the silver crown.

Having carefully packed the treasure in a wooden cask, he slung it behind the rude waggon which held his miscellaneous wares, and started on his homeward journey through the dark Bohemian forests. As the waggon went jolting down a rough road between the blue-black aisles of pines, the cask became loosened and fell into a deep pool of muddy water, hidden by the overshadowing branches of the sombre trees. The disguised prince plunged into the water, but the dim light of an autumn afternoon and the slippery bank of the forest tarn made the rescue of the cask and its precious contents a difficult matter. In the waning twilight success at length crowned his efforts, and the shivering merchant, half-drowned and covered with mud, proceeded on his way, trying to forget chilled limbs and chattering teeth in the elation of triumph which warmed his ambitious heart.

Elizabeth, the widowed queen of King Albert of Hungary, was the next to disturb the safety of the silver crown.

The death of the king had plunged the country into a vortex of strife and confusion, which raged in ever-increasing tumult round the red towers of Buda, threatening the life and liberty of the desolate queen. In the midst of the contest she resolved to escape from the dangers which threatened her, taking with her the ancient crown round which the hopes and affections of Hungarian royalty had entwined themselves for so many centuries, regarding it almost as a symbol of faith as well as an ensign of regal power.

With the aid of a lady-in-waiting, the queen removed the heavy crown from its satin-lined casket, and with trembling fingers sewed up the treasure in a velvet cushion, while her handmaiden, drawing the iron bolt of the ponderous oaken door, listened intently for any approaching footfall on the stone stairs which led to the turret chamber of her royal mistress. Darkness fell, gradually all distant sounds died away, as undisturbed save by her own fears, the queen, with flushed face and fast-beating heart, finished her task.

The palace-clock tolled twelve before the work was done. The cry of the watchman and the clanging arms of the sentinels relieving guard echoed for a moment through the silence of the sleeping household. Then the deep stillness of a winter midnight brooded once more over palace and city, and the fast-falling snow, which muffled every sound, enabled the trembling fugitives to escape the vigilance of the guard.

The queen and her faithful attendant stole out unobserved through a postern door, into the thick and murky air, and, descending the cliffs in safety, fled across the frozen Danube. Slipping and stumbling, and falling across great blocks of ice in the darkness, the queen, though bruised, terrified and exhausted with fatigue, never lost her hold of the precious crown; but after taking refuge in Germany, she was reduced to abject poverty; want stared her in the face, and in her distress she pawned the historic crown of Hungary to the Emperor Frederick for three thousand ducats.

Indignation fired every patriotic Magyar heart; war was declared, and, after much bloodshed, the battered crown was recovered by the Hungarian army and taken back in triumph to Buda, where it was locked up in a fortress and guarded night and day by two State dignitaries chosen from the Magyar nobility.

For the next two centuries, though the sacred crown was taken on many long and eventful journeys, it never fell into the hands of an enemy. Then came the revolution, which caused the Hungarian kingdom to totter to its very foundations, and the crown again narrowly escaped seizure. It was saved by a band of patriots, who, in order to protect it from the Austrian army, buried it deeply in the heart of a gloomy forest.

Fifty years passed away before the precious relic was disinterred from its hiding-place. Damaged, bent, and battered almost out of recognition, it was then conveyed by a rejoicing multitude to the Hungarian capital, where it has ever since remained in safety, considered as the most priceless treasure of the national regalia, and trebly endeared to every brave Magyar heart—by the lives sacrificed in its defence and the wars which have raged around it.

The veneration with which this ancient crown is regarded may be compared to the feeling accorded to the tattered and blood-stained colours of a regiment, wrested on many a battle-field, amid smoke and carnage, from the hands of the enemy. The strife and tumult which for so many centuries surrounded the silver crown, only increased its moral value and heightened its significance, finally winning the due recognition of Hungarian needs and requirements.

The brave Magyar race stoutly refused to denationalise itself by incorporation with Austria, and, at last, the necessity of self-government for Hungary was admitted. Francis Joseph of Hapsburg was solemnly crowned King of Hungary as well as Emperor of Austria, and accepted with the silver crown the double responsibility of the double monarchy.

Thus the historic crown fulfilled its destiny, and at length rests in undisturbed security after the centuries of conflict in which it played such an important part. The transitional state between barbarism and civilisation has been of necessity prolonged in a country so steeped in warlike memories; but the independence so gallantly fought for has been achieved at last, and the ancient silver crown of Hungary, reverenced for so many ages as the emblem of national freedom, has become the eternal monument and memorial of national victory.

MR. WARRENNE:
MEDICAL PRACTITIONER.

CHAPTER IX.

A RUINED GLOVE.

MAUD and Alice were fond of spending the fine summer mornings in the arbour at the bottom of the garden, reading and working and sometimes practising their songs; for the place was so secluded that they had no fear of attracting passengers by the sound of their voices. This morning, however, they often interrupted their studies to talk over the events of the preceding evening. It seemed as if Alice would never come to an end of her questions. She wanted to have everybody described, and all their sayings repeated.

"And Mr. Courtenay!—only to think of your meeting the very man of whom Leonard has spoken so often!" cried Alice.

"And that he should be the same person who frightened us in the lane when we were children!" returned Maud.

"Tell me again all he said to you," said Alice.

"It was not much—I wouldn't talk to him—I despise him so!" exclaimed Maud.

"But he does not know that Leonard is a gentleman?" asked Alice.

"And do you think that if Leonard were rich he would treat the poorest person in the world as Mr. Courtenay treats him?" said Maud, indignantly. "On the contrary, he would be even more courteous than he is now."

"I wish he was rich!" cried Alice.

"I wonder what would become of his philosophy then?" said Maud.

"He would not need it," replied Alice, simply.

"Shall we sing that duet again?" asked Maud.

"Do," said Alice, striking her tuning-fork.

As they had remarkably beautiful voices, and as Mr. Warrenne had strained a point to give them the best instruction, it was not wonderful that they sang to admiration.

Old Karl stopped his barrow under the garden wall, and, in the discordant voice common to deformed persons, murmured an accompaniment to the simple German air. Karl was privileged; Maud saw and heard him, gave him a nod, and went on with her part.

All at once Alice stopped, laid her hand on her sister's arm, and listened.

"Hush !—footsteps !" she said.

"So, this is where you hide yourselves !" said Mr. Courtenay, making his appearance from amongst the shrubs. "I was told I should find you in the garden."

Maud drew up indignantly, bowed because he took off his hat as he spoke, and looked inquiringly at him, as if to ask what brought him there.

"I heard all the first verse, and part of the second," said Courtenay, coming close to them ; "you sing remarkably well, upon my word."

"We ought to be flattered," said Maud. "Do you want papa ? He is out."

"Thank you, no ; I want *you*. This is your sister ? How do you do, Miss Alice ?"

Alice looked up with a shrinking expression of dislike on her countenance, bowed, and remained silent and listless.

"She does not like strangers ?" he asked, looking at Maud.

"Some strangers," said Maud ; "she goes by the voice."

"Well," he replied, with a smile, "in voices she has a right to be fastidious. But to my business. Mrs. Creswick wishes you to drive out with her to-day ; she will call for you at two o'clock."

"Oh, Maud !" said Alice ; "it is to sketch the Roman arch ; Mrs. Creswick said she would take you soon."

"I am much obliged to Mrs. Creswick," said Maud, rising, as if to close the interview ; "I will take care to be ready."

"Where are you going ?" he asked.

"To gather some peas," returned Maud ; "you may tell Miss Reynolds so, when you go back, she is greatly interested in my doings."

"Why don't you make your German servant gather them ?"

"Because I like to do it myself," replied Maud.

"I will help you," said Courtenay.

"Oh, pray do !" returned Maud ; "it will be something new to you to find yourself gathering peas."

"And you can tell your brother of *me*," said Mr. Courtenay ; "then we shall be even."

Now, when Maud acceded to his proposition, she had not the least idea that he was in earnest. She was surprised and vexed when he coolly took up the basket from the arbour seat, and prepared to set to work.

"Are these the peas ?" said Mr. Courtenay ; "what do you call them ?"

"I call them Blue Prussians !" said Maud, growing very cross. "You don't hold the basket right—I can't reach it there."

"Oh ! I beg your pardon ; you must let me come between you and your sister ; then you will both be able to get at it."

"And then," cried Maud, "you gather all the little pods that are of no use. Pray leave it alone! Any one could tell that you were born in London!"

"But I was not born in London; on the contrary, I was 'raised' in the West of England, quite in the country; but I never gathered peas before. You ought to teach me, instead of scolding and growing angry."

"I should be sorry to have to teach you anything," returned Maud.

Alice, with one hand on the rim of the basket, gathered fast with the other. She said nothing, but smiled at Maud's vehemence.

"Look here, I have caught you in the fact," said Courtenay; "it is you who gather the little pods, not me. You cannot deny that you gathered that one."

"That one I did," said Maud; "but you gathered all the other little ones. When there are no more peas, I shall tell papa who gathered them wastefully."

"Dear me! Miss Alice, don't you pity me?"

Alice laughed.

"There, I am sure, Miss Warrenne, you cannot mean to eat more peas than those."

"As if I ate them all!" cried Maud. "Besides, you do not in the least know how many there will be when they are shelled."

"That is true. I am sadly ignorant; but you should not be proud because you know more than I. Do you not play the organ, Miss Alice?"

"Only the harmonium," said Alice. "I have not an organ."

"Will you let me hear you play?"

Alice looked perplexed, but Maud said firmly, though she coloured as she spoke: "Papa is out, and therefore Alice and I cannot receive any visitors."

Mr. Courtenay seemed to see the propriety of this remark; for he said immediately, "I would not, on any account, intrude upon you; but, eh! no rule without an exception."

For at that moment there came up the garden walk, with the air of being completely at home, a gentleman, who, though no longer young, was still handsome.

"Oh! it is Mr. Scudamore. Good morning," cried Maud, and, without farther ceremony, she and her sister ran forward to meet him.

Mr. Courtenay stayed just long enough to see Mr. Scudamore stoop down and pry into Maud's basket, and then turn to go back to the house, with one of the girls hanging upon each arm.

"I must ascertain who this Scudamore is," said he to himself; "a fine-looking man, upon my word."

"I thought you had been an immense time away," said Florence, as Mr. Courtenay entered the dining-room, where they were all at

luncheon. "I suppose you have been spending the morning to very good purpose with my aunt's pattern, Miss Warrenne?"

"Is it so?" said Courtenay, turning with a delighted countenance to Mrs. Creswick; "do you think so highly of her? And you never told me!"

"Perhaps I left you the pleasure of finding it out," said Mrs. Creswick.

"Miss Warrenne will be happy to drive with you at two," said Courtenay.

"Then, of course, Mr. Courtenay, you don't ride; we must try to do without you," said Florence, ironically.

"I ride, Miss Reynolds, but not your way, I am afraid."

"Some secret," said Florence, turning scornfully to Captain O'Neill; "I suppose you know his proceedings pretty well. Perhaps Miss Warrenne is not the only favourite in this neighbourhood."

"Florence, my dear!" said Mrs. Creswick, in a warning tone.

Captain O'Neill seemed quite overpowered by this witticism; he did not appear to know how to leave off laughing.

"I wonder who is to chaperon her through all the love-making!" exclaimed Florence, who seemed neither inclined to take Mrs. Creswick's warning hint, nor to let Maud alone.

"She seems to be one of the few young ladies who can do without a chaperon," said Courtenay, coolly.

"Oh, we all know her to be perfection," said Florence; "and perfect people are to me intolerable."

"There is another class of intolerable people, to my mind," said Courtenay; "those who never aim at perfection."

Captain O'Neill did not understand him, but Florence did; she coloured with anger and jealousy; for though she had not the remotest idea that Mr. Courtenay had any intention of recommending himself to Maud Warrenne—indeed, she felt far too much contempt for her to believe it possible—yet she could not endure that the smallest particle of praise should be bestowed in her presence upon any other woman.

"And who is this Mr. Scudamore?" asked Mr. Courtenay, after a pause.

"Oh, the pleasantest man!" cried Florence; "he was once in the army; and I do *so* like military men."

"Even when they are English," said Courtenay, drily.

"Yes; that is the only thing which makes them bearable," returned Florence.

"Mr. Scudamore is a very worthy neighbour of ours," said Mrs. Creswick; "an elderly man, and an intimate friend of Mr. Warrenne's."

"Oh, you need not fear his running away with Maud from you," cried Florence.

"I am not timid, Miss Reynolds," returned Courtenay, quietly.

Florence, finding that she gained nothing by wrangling with him, rose pettishly, and went upstairs to put on her habit.

Mrs. Creswick called for Maud, and bade her bring her pencils to draw the archway. It was a ruin but little known, in a very unfrequented part of the country; standing among pasture fields and lanes, rough from disuse, and thickly belted with old hedges. A crooked ash had taken root above the arch, and hung fantastically over, while gnarled oaks and sycamores pressed rudely against the crumbling sides of the grey stonework. They left the carriage and walked a little way down the lane to get a better view of the ruin. Just beneath the arch, with his arm over his horse's neck, stood Mr. Courtenay, waiting their arrival, with as much composure as if he had merely halted to rest his horse in his progress up the steep ascent.

"Put me in, if you like, Miss Warrenne," he said, as soon as they drew near enough to speak. "I charge nothing for sitting."

Maud did not deign to reply to him, but said pettishly to Mrs. Creswick, "He blocks up the arch with his horse!"

"Does he?" said Mrs. Creswick, smiling; "suppose then we ask him to move?"

This Maud did not condescend to do. She took one of the camp-stools that the servant was placing, and opened her sketch-book.

"I think, Mr. Courtenay, we must have you a little nearer this way!" said Mrs. Creswick.

"With the greatest pleasure," said he, coming forward. "Here, Bob, hold my horse."

The man's name was Lewis, but that made no difference to Mr. Courtenay.

Maud, who remembered how perseveringly he had assigned the *sobriquet* of Mr. Cooke to Leonard, turned away her head, that he might not see her laugh.

"Now then, have you any pencils to be cut?" said Courtenay, throwing himself on the bank by her side.

"No, thank you."

"Some colours, then, to be rubbed?"

"Nothing—I can't bear to be waited on," said Maud, looking steadily on the arch.

"How do you mean to shade it?"

"With sepia—when I get home."

"It would look better coloured."

"Very likely."

"You can't do it, I suppose?"

"Yes; Maud can draw admirably in water-colours," said Mrs. Creswick, finding that no answer came from Maud.

"Ah! then it is only idleness," said Courtenay.

"Is this your usual method of ingratiating yourself with ladies, Mr. Courtenay?" asked Mrs. Creswick, while Maud had stepped nearer to the arch to examine something a little more minutely.

"I never ingratiate myself—I never cared for a woman before—I never shall again—it's not my way," said Courtenay, briefly.

"You cannot hope to succeed without a little more deference; we expect it before marriage," said Mrs. Creswick, with a smile.

"Yes, and what do you get after?" said Courtenay. "If she likes me, I will make her happy; if she does not, what should I gain by persuading her for a time that she did? I could get on well enough with a wife I cared nothing about; but if I married *her* and found she had made a mistake, I would blow my brains out!"

"My dear Mr. Courtenay, do not talk so!" cried Mrs. Creswick, quite startled by the coolness with which he announced his intention.

"And what would you have me tell her?" pursued Mr. Courtenay: "that she is beautiful?—she knows that already. That she is noble?—it runs in her veins. That she is accomplished?—she might say I am no judge. No, depend upon it, my way is the fairest."

"Have you got it right?" asked Mrs. Creswick, as Maud came back to her seat.

"Oh yes! I thought it was some decoration; but it is only decay," returned Maud.

"A very pretty part of the country," said Courtenay to Mrs. Creswick.

"Yes; just here you get a little silver strip of the river, and farther on the mullioned windows of Forrel Court peeping through the elms."

"You see it through the arch, like a picture set in a frame," said Courtenay. "Have you got it all into your distance, Miss Warrenne?"

"Of course," returned Maud.

"I shall like to see the end of this sketch, as I was present at the beginning," said Courtenay.

No answer from Maud.

"We must try and get a peep of it!" said Mrs. Creswick.

"*You* shall, Mrs. Creswick," said Maud.

Courtenay smiled, and, taking up her glove which lay on the ground beside her, amused himself by drawing out the slender fingers.

"Why, he has got my glove, Mrs. Creswick!" exclaimed Maud, colouring with anger.

"Give it her," said Mrs. Creswick, feeling half amused and half unequal to the task of mediating between the two disputants.

Courtenay pressed the glove to his lips, and handed it to Maud. She flung it down, and set her foot upon it—absolutely crushing it into the ground in her anger.

"My dear, my dear!" said Mrs. Creswick.

"Now, I have done, Mrs. Creswick," said Maud, shutting her book; "and I should have done before, if I had not been bored."

Then crossing before Mr. Courtenay, she got into the carriage, and sat at the farther side, looking over her sketch until they started.

"A very excellent young man," said Mrs. Creswick, after a pause.

"That is a good thing," replied Maud; "when people don't know how to be agreeable, it is a comfort to think they are excellent."

"Here he is, galloping after us," said Mrs. Creswick.

Maud looked another way.

"Just in time to hand you out," exclaimed Courtenay, coming up, as the carriage stopped to set down Maud at her garden gate.

After this adventure, Maud resolutely declined all Mrs. Creswick's overtures; she would not drive with her—she would not go to drink tea at the Ferns. Courtenay was—not in despair, that was very foreign to his nature—but exceedingly chafed and put out of his way. He confided his annoyance to Mrs. Creswick, who sympathised with him, but declared her inability to do more. All she could promise was that she would get Maud, somehow or other, to attend the evening party she meant to give next week.

On Sunday Mr. Courtenay set out for church before any one else, and loitered about the churchyard until the Warrennes appeared.

They came on each side of their father, quietly dressed in their plain straw bonnets and white gowns. As Maud passed Mr. Courtenay, who stood by the porch, she bowed hurriedly in return for his salutation, which she did not see until she had almost passed him, and then went straight to her pew. And that slight bow was all he got in return for loitering half an hour about the churchyard, and drawing on himself the sarcastic wonderment of Miss Reynolds for the rest of the day.

Maud never turned her eyes towards him during the service, and although he was able to contemplate, unobserved, her broad forehead and long downcast eyelashes, yet he would have rather preferred that she should seem just now and then a little conscious of his presence.

And when church was over he came out too soon, and missed her that way; and while he was handing Mrs. Creswick into her carriage, he had the satisfaction of seeing her passing on the arm of Mr. Scudamore, who was addressing to her some jesting speech in which he could only distinctly catch the single word, "Dick!"

CHAPTER X.

MUSIC AND DANCING.

Mr. Warrenne could not refuse Mrs. Creswick's kind and pressing request that he would bring both his daughters to the Ferns the night of her party. Maud rebelled a little; but, contrary to her expectation, Alice was easily persuaded. If her father would promise to keep beside her all the time, she thought she could encounter it; and she should find some amusement in listening to the music (it was a quadrille party), and catching the conversation of the people around.

It happened that Mr. Scudamore was also invited; and the girls

were delighted at an addition to their party which promised to render them still more independent of Miss Reynolds and her associates.

Mr. Scudamore brought them each a beautiful scarf of red cachemire, worked at the ends in large flowers with silver thread. As these scarves were very narrow, Maud suggested that they should be worn as sashes; she saw that nothing could be more picturesque than the contrast with their white muslin dresses; and she did not know that anything not universally worn is sure to draw down the wrath of a certain class of persons. So they went—Alice and her father, Maud and Mr. Scudamore. Simple as were their dresses, the splendid scarves round their waists, with the silver fringes nearly reaching their feet, made them appear effective, and they were beyond compare the loveliest girls in the room: Maud, with her figure tall, slight, and spirited as Diana, and her dark hair banded back and shining like a mirror; Alice, shorter, softer, her face and neck shaded by the wild profusion of her beautiful ringlets.

The company were assembled in the music-room in order to hear some professional singers, who were engaged to perform before the dancing commenced.

Courtenay joined the Warrennes just as the singing was about to commence; was introduced to Mr. Warrenne by Mrs. Creswick, and stood leaning on the back of Maud's chair.

"Have you forgiven me yet?" asked Courtenay.

"I have forgotten all about you," said Maud, turning away impatiently.

"That's better still—we are good friends then," he said.

Maud did not choose to confirm this statement.

"You are fond of music, of course?" said Courtenay.

"Yes, I like it," replied Maud coldly.

"Here comes the *prima donna*," said Courtenay; "I don't know what her voice may turn out, but she is a very sensible person."

She was a German, and most probably, from her appearance, of Jewish extraction: short, heavy, and dignified in her aspect, with large, handsome arms, and a brow like a thunder-cloud. She wore some scarlet flowers in her black hair, walked slowly and indolently to the piano, dropped her fan and handkerchief into a chair behind her, and sat down to accompany herself, making a slow and sleepy bow to the professional gentleman who had offered her his services. She sang with great power, great ease, and great expression.

As soon as she rose from the piano, Mrs. Creswick came up and begged Maud and Alice to sing a duet—asked it so earnestly, as a favour to herself, that it was not easy to refuse.

Maud led Alice to the piano, and she struck off a prelude with the hand of a master.

Courtenay said something in a low tone to the German singer, and she lifted up her dark Jewish eyes with an expression of interest and surprise. He had told her that Alice was blind.

The sisters sang beautifully. Alice was not timid, because she could not see the people, and Maud felt brave because she sang with Alice. And not attempting anything beyond the reach of amateurs to execute, and gifted with voices of that pure and vibrating sweetness which may so often be found among the English, it might have been supposed that their singing would have been generally liked. But not at all—the guests seemed horribly bored, and heartily glad when the duet, which was a very short one, was over.

The professional people, however, gathered near to listen, and nearer to praise; for it is very odd that musical people are more generous than others in bestowing commendation on those who excel.

"It is a talent that God so often gives to the blind," said the German singer with much feeling, as Alice returned to her seat; "you are very fortunate to possess it: rich, it gives you pleasure; poor, it would have given you bread."

Alice stretched out her hand to the singer. "I am so glad to have pleased *you*," she said.

"Mademoiselle Mohr would prefer speaking German," said Courtenay, for the last few sentences had passed in French.

"It is the same to me," said Alice.

"You would have been flattered if you could have seen Mademoiselle Mohr during your song," said Courtenay to Alice; "I assure you, she had tears in her eyes."

"And Mademoiselle 'tears in her voice,'" said the German; "but you," she added, looking up to Mr. Courtenay, "were equally pleased."

"Quite enchanted," returned Courtenay, drily.

Mademoiselle Mohr thought he spoke ironically—she looked puzzled. "Yet I thought you loved music," she said.

"Very much attached to it. I have a stall always at the Opera, and I listen to the ballet."

"How flattering to us!" said the singer, with a smile.

"After that, I cannot hope to induce you to give us another song," said Courtenay.

"The dancing is going to begin," replied the German; "you who listen to the ballet, should now be thinking of finding a partner."

"Presently," said Courtenay. "I shall like to hear your opinion of the lady who is about to favour the company."

Captain O'Neill was now seen ostentatiously leading forward Miss Reynolds, in a white lace dress, with a beautiful garniture of China roses. She looked very lovely and very diffident—turned round with a movement full of grace to Captain O'Neill as she took her seat, and gave him her large bouquet to hold with an air of sweet resignation that might have become Lady Jane Grey when she offered her prayer-book to the Lieutenant of the Tower. But her singing was not quite so good as that which preceded it. She got hold of a very fine air by Niedermeyer, with a great many flats and sharps, and she had an unlucky propensity to confuse those useful little steps in the musical

ladder. Everybody was glad when she had finished: Captain O'Neill, because he could not flirt so well while she was singing; Courtenay, because it bored him; Alice, because it gave her absolute pain; the German, because, under her solemn aspect, she was shaking with suppressed laughter; and the rest of the people, because they wanted to begin dancing.

But all round the room there ran a murmur of "Beautiful! Exquisite! This *is* singing! We have not had such a treat all the evening!"

And one worthy lady turned to Maud, and congratulated her on the great advantage she might derive from listening to such a delightful performance.

Maud replied politely, and Courtenay, after translating the lady's remark into German for the benefit of Mademoiselle Mohr, who burst into an indignant laugh, said to Maud:

"You did quite right; I make a point of it myself; there is no possible absurdity in which I do not gladly acquiesce. It is too Quixotic an effort to attempt to explain to people."

"There was nothing to explain," said Maud, smiling; "the lady thought Miss Reynolds sang better than I did; I was the last person who should try to convince her that it was not the case."

"How very well you speak German," said Courtenay.

"Oh! when Leonard was with us we spoke it constantly, he was so fond of it," replied Maud. Then stopping, as the name of her brother brought before her all Mr. Courtenay's airs, she turned to Mr. Scudamore on the other side.

"I wish, Mr. Scudamore, I could give you a little bit of this sofa," said she; "but it is impossible."

"Eh! child?—oh! I don't wish to sit down. Who are you going to dance with?"

"I hope with me," said Courtenay, advancing to her.

"No, thank you," said Maud, quietly, but firmly.

Courtenay bowed and drew back.

"Do you know what you have done, child?" said Mr. Scudamore. "Do you know that you cannot dance now with any one else?—that you must actually sit still all the rest of the evening?"

"I shall not sit still, grandfather," said Maud, "I shall walk about with you, and look at the dancers. I don't choose to dance with that man."

"Ah! if Dick were but here," said Mr. Scudamore, as he offered Maud his arm.

The quadrille band now struck up, and the drawing-room was speedily thronged by the dancers and the lookers-on.

Florence swept past Maud, on the arm of Captain O'Neill, with a look that seemed plainly to say, "Poor soul, nobody will ask you to dance!"

"Could you not have said you were engaged, or you would wait a

little, or anything that would have left you at liberty?" pursued Mr. Scudamore. "People won't believe you had the opportunity."

"It seems to prey upon your mind, grandfather," said Maud, laughing. "I shall consult you next time, and get a fib ready."

The quadrille being over, people began to form a waltz.

A very young gentleman, with a pert, dark, Spanish face, was leading Mademoiselle Mohr to the dancers. He passed close to Mr. Courtenay, who was leaning against the wall, looking coolly on.

"I say, Courtenay, it is such a bore!" said the young gentleman.

"What is a bore?"

"Dancing with this woman, who can't understand what I say."

"My dear friend, depend upon it, she will not be a loser on that account," said Mr. Courtenay, quietly.

This kind of speech was always well received by Mr. Courtenay's friends, under the idea that it was "his way," that he never meant anything, and that those people who thought him satirical were "quite mistaken."

"I say, I wish you would take her off my hands," pursued the young gentleman.

"With all my heart."

And Courtenay, in a few words, explained to Mademoiselle Mohr that the young gentleman was reduced to despair at being unable to converse with her, and that he hoped for the honour of dancing with her in his stead.

The singer, well pleased, consented to the transfer, and the young gentleman trotted up to Maud.

"I'm so enwaptured," said the youth, who always perverted the letter R; "I thought I should never have got wid of her. Why can't she speak English?"

"For the same reason that you cannot speak German, perhaps," said Maud, laughing.

"Will you do me the honour to waltz with me?" asked the young gentleman.

"No, that I cannot do, unfortunately," replied Maud.

"Cannot you waltz?"

"Not this evening."

"Pway don't wefuse me, for I've set my heart on dancing with you," said the young gentleman.

"Not to-night, indeed; for I have refused some one else," said Maud.

"Oh! if that is all," said the young gentleman, "I beg that you will begin diwectly, and if the fellow gwumbles, I'll call him out."

"No, no, young gentleman, that will never do!" said Mr. Scudamore, looking very much amused.

"Who was it?" asked the youth; "I should not wonder if it were that fellow O'Neill. I should like to pick a quawwel with him, for he is sometimes vewy diswespectful in his manner to me."

"It does not matter who it was," said Maud, smiling; "it is al over with me for this evening."

The young gentleman remained shuffling about near Maud for a minute or two, and then exclaimed, as if a thought suddenly struck him:

"Stop! wait a bit; I'll set it all to wights in a minute."

Then crossing to Mr. Courtenay, who had led Mademoiselle Mohr to a seat, and was standing talking to her, the young gentleman suddenly pulled him by the arm.

"Hollo! what do you want now?" exclaimed Mr. Courtenay.

"Oh! I say; I want to dance with that angel in the wed scawf."

"Well, dance away then, and don't bore me."

"But I wish you would attend to me," said the young gentleman, with another pull; "thewe is a difficulty!"

"A difficulty, is there?"

"Yes; she has wefused some fellow, and so she hesitates about accepting me."

"And you are such a reasonable person, that of course you see the propriety of giving up the matter."

"Never!" said the young gentleman. "I want you to come and pewsuade her, or else I shall do something despewate!"

"You look very formidable to-night," said Mr. Courtenay, drily. "I am quite at your orders."

"Come, then," said the young gentleman, "I know it is that wetch O'Neill; and I shall have the twiumph of cawwying her off before his eyes!"

It was so customary for Mr. Courtenay to be applied to by all his friends in their difficulties, and to bring them through by some means or other, that the young gentleman made sure of his partner on the spot.

Mr. Courtenay went up coolly to Maud, and, turning towards his companion, said: "Allow me to present to you Mr. Osborne—Miss Warrenne."

Maud bowed, and wondered; but she was still more surprised when he added:

"Mr. Osborne is very ambitious of dancing with you. May I hope that he will be more successful in his application than I have been?"

Maud coloured deeply. There was something generous, she thought, in this frankness; and she was keenly sensitive to generosity of character; but then it showed that he was not reduced to despair by her refusal, and that was an unflattering view of the case.

"I do not wish to dance to-night," she replied; "and I thought I should have been understood when I pleaded a former refusal. I am quite sorry that Mr. Osborne should have taken the trouble to urge his request."

Mr. Osborne seemed still very much disposed to argue the point; but Mr. Courtenay, taking the vacant seat next to Maud, said to him:

"I almost think you had better try your fortune in another quarter."

It seemed as if none of Mr. Courtenay's friends were in the habit of disputing his commands; for Mr. Osborne, after a little shuffling indecision of gesture, went to another part of the room.

"Now, I wonder," said Mr. Courtenay, looking steadily at Maud, "what was your objection to dancing with me?"

Mr. Scudamore had left her to speak to Mr. Warrenne, who was with Alice at the other side of the room. Maud, surrounded by strangers, felt as much alone as if she had been in a desert. She coloured, and made no reply.

"Because," he continued, "I can't well have offended you during our very short acquaintance; unless, indeed, you have not yet forgiven me for meddling with your glove."

Still Maud remained silent, wishing heartily that she was out of reach of his searching eyes.

"But if I have, from any inadvertence, displeased you," he pursued, "I beg you sincerely to forget it. I could imagine nothing that I would more earnestly avoid than giving you offence."

"You have not given me any," replied Maud, in a constrained voice.

"Here is Miss Warrenne determined against dancing," said Mr. Courtenay, as Mrs. Creswick came up to them.

"What! Maud sitting still!" said Mrs. Creswick. "Whose fault is that, my dear?"

"My own fault, Mrs. Creswick; I prefer looking on," replied Maud.

"Do ladies ever tell the truth on these occasions?" asked Mr. Courtenay.

Mr. Scudamore joined them at this moment, to the great relief of Maud.

"My dear," he said, "your papa and Alice are going; they are both tired. If you like to stay, I will take care of you."

"You don't know what a charge you undertake, Mr. Scudamore," said Maud. "I will go at once for fear of getting you into a scrape."

"Will you, really?" said Mrs. Creswick.

"If you please, my dear Mrs. Creswick," returned Maud; "I am growing sleepy."

"That is because you won't dance," said Courtenay, following her into the hall.

Mr. Scudamore put on her shawl, and handed her down the steps.

"Oh, I am so glad it is over!" said Maud, as they stepped out into the moonlight and the fresh, dewy air; and the sounds of the waltz beat fainter and fainter as they left the house behind them. "The best part of a party must always be the walk home!"

CHAPTER XI.

IN VAIN.

THE attentions of Captain O'Neill to Miss Reynolds at this party were so marked that the guests all went home impressed with the belief that he was her accepted suitor.

He had danced with her whenever he found her disengaged; the rest of the time he spent in wandering about the room, or taking up the seats which ought to have been reserved for the ladies; for he was one of those men who cannot pay attention to one woman without rudely neglecting all the others who are present. Mrs. Creswick watched their growing intimacy with much disquietude; and on the morning after the dance, she thought that it was proper to come to an explanation with her niece on the subject.

Florence received her aunt's summons with much dissatisfaction, lingered over her toilet to the last possible moment, and then made her appearance with an encouraging air of weariness and indifference; sank down into an easy-chair opposite to her aunt, and prepared herself to listen.

Mrs. Creswick, seated perfectly upright, turned over the book before her for some moments in silence, and then fixing her breathless looks upon her niece, she said:

"Now, my dear, will you tell me exactly how you are situated with regard to Captain O'Neill?"

"Do you know, my dear aunt, that you have chosen a very difficult question to put to me?" said Florence, languidly smiling.

"Take plenty of time, my dear," said Mrs. Creswick; "all I ask is a very clear and accurate reply."

"How I wish that I had Miss Warrenne to assist me!" exclaimed Florence; "she could define, I dare say, every shade of a gentleman's attentions; but for me, my dear aunt, I am afraid I must reply I don't know!"

"You can tell me, perhaps, whether you have yet received a proposal from Captain O'Neill?" said Mrs. Creswick, steadily.

"Even that, my dear aunt, is sometimes no easy question; there are so many ways of insinuating a proposal, as Maud Warrenne will tell you."

"Suppose we leave Maud Warrenne quite alone for the present, and come back to the point," said Mrs. Creswick, calmly.

At this crisis, Florence was seized with a fit of laughter that she seemed unable to control. "You must excuse me, my dear aunt," she cried; "but those scarves! Did you ever see anything so preposterous as the figures those poor girls had made of themselves?"

"Now, my dear," said Mrs. Creswick, patiently, "as soon as we can get rid of the scarves, we will go back to the old story. Has Captain O'Neill yet made you an offer?"

"Why—no—not exactly," said Florence, hesitating.

"Then I am thankful to think that it is not yet too late for you to retire with credit from this affair," said Mrs. Creswick, "for you must be aware that he is a person whom your father would highly disapprove."

Florence coloured high with anger, and said with a disdainful smile: "Is it a fair question to ask in what manner Captain O'Neill has had the misfortune to displease you?"

"I have reason to believe," said Mrs. Creswick, "that he is a man totally devoid of religious, and even of moral principle; that he has always led a very irregular life, and that he is so deficient in education and intelligence, that there is but slight ground to hope for his reformation; for Doctor Arnold (and he is a very high authority) tells us that 'if you take away a man's knowledge, you do not bring him to the state of an infant, but to that of a brute—and of one of the most mischievous and malignant of the brute creation. . . . . He then who is a fool as far as regards earthly things, is much more a fool with regard to heavenly things. He who cannot raise himself even to the lower height, how can he attain to the higher?'"

Mrs. Creswick having read the above sentences from the book which lay before her, closed the volume and looked steadily at her niece.

"I am sure he is a very honourable man!" exclaimed Florence, indignantly; "he goes everywhere, he is in the best society! I believe he is no worse than other people, only he is no hypocrite!"

"It pains me," said Mrs. Creswick, "to hear you quote the opinion of *society* in support of any man's character or conduct. How many persons move through society, caressed and honoured, who are at enmity with God, and basely negligent of all that elevates and purifies our nature!"

"I never had the least ambition to marry a Methodist, my dear aunt," said Florence, quietly.

"I think it right," said Mrs. Creswick after a pause, "to tell you a circumstance that fell under the knowledge of one of my intimate friends, not very long ago, although I should hope that at your age you are a perfect stranger to the very name of such transactions." (Poor Mrs. Creswick! She had never been behind the scenes of a boarding-school!)

"Not long ago," she continued, "he persuaded a married woman, the wife of a tradesman, to quit her husband and children for his protection."

"Drawn in, I dare say," replied Florence, with perfect indifference; "those women are so designing!"

"In this instance," said Mrs. Creswick, sternly, "the wretched young woman was much respected until she attracted the notice of Captain O'Neill. He ruined the peace of a family hitherto remarkable for its quiet comfort; he deprived three unhappy infants of a mother's care, and he destroyed the life as well as the virtue of his

victim, who died two months ago, of grief and shame, of what is usually called a broken heart."

Mrs. Creswick had spoken with much feeling, and she paused, hoping to have aroused some displeasure, perhaps some sorrow, in her niece's mind. But Florence, after arranging her bracelet with much care, looked languidly towards her aunt.

"Poor man," she said, "what a bore for him! I dare say it is unknown the scenes he had to go through. He will be wiser next time, and not attempt to undermine such very rigid virtue. It really does not answer on the whole."

Mrs. Creswick was bitterly disappointed, for she made it a rule to think the very best she could of people, and she had hoped to find something like womanly feeling still lurking in her niece's heart. A thought just crossed her mind for a moment, as to whether a creature so devoid of sensibility, so callous to right and wrong, was worth any farther effort to save; but it was one of her maxims that the fulfilment of our duty should be always entirely independent of persons or circumstances.

She glanced at her watch, and then, turning with a calm face to her niece, she said:

"I will detain you but a short time, but I must beg your earnest attention to what I am about to say. I had hoped that such a tale as the one I have just touched upon, would have decided you against the most splendid match that the world could offer. But if your taste leads you to prefer what is depraved, you must be saved from your own inclinations. You cannot marry Captain O'Neill; your father would not allow it; and, therefore, it is deeply important that you give him no reason to believe that his suit will be successful."

"I am too candid, my dear aunt," said Florence, rising gracefully; "if I like a person, I cannot help showing it; and should Captain O'Neill continue to please me, I must try and persuade papa to settle something very handsome upon us!"

And with these words she glided gently out of the room.

Mrs. Creswick rose also, took her bonnet from its box, and her mantle from its drawer—she was very fond of waiting on herself—and put them carefully on; then stepping to the open window before she left the room, she saw Florence crossing the lawn with Captain O'Neill; he seemed to be begging, and she coquettishly withholding a bit of geranium which she held in her hand. Such was the result of the morning's interview with her niece.

The sisters, in their turn, had much to discuss, the morning after the ball.

"I am so sorry you did not dance, Maud," said Alice. "Mr. Scudamore told papa he had never seen you look so handsome."

"The grandfather is partial," replied Maud; "but I should not like the idea, indeed, of dancing with that horrid man. I can hardly speak civilly to him, when I think of Leonard!"

"I think Miss Reynolds ought to marry that scornful Mr. Courtenay," said Alice, smiling.

"They would be very well matched," returned Maud.

"Does he waltz well?" asked Alice.

"Pretty well; not nearly so well as Leonard."

"Is he handsome?"

"Not at all! Don't let us talk of him; it puts me out of patience!" exclaimed Maud.

"Look out, and tell me what the grandfather is doing with papa," said Alice.

"They are walking up and down the front, and the grandfather has a letter in his hand."

"Anything about Alberic?" exclaimed Alice, turning pale.

"Grandfather," cried Maud, leaning from the window, "Alice wishes to know the contents of that letter she hears you have in your hand."

"Maud!" said Alice, trying to draw her sister back.

"Oh, you are up, are you, after all your fatigues?" said Mr. Scudamore, coming to the window, and sitting down on the ledge. "This letter is about Dick, Mistress Maud. He has been wounded at the taking of that Fort they were expecting to be ordered against when he last wrote."

"Oh, grandfather, how sorry I am for you!" exclaimed Alice.

"All in the day's work," said Mr. Scudamore, coolly; "but he has a mind to try what a sea-voyage will do for him. It seems he has been hit in the knee, and the doctors there advise him to lose the limb. He thinks they will manage better for him over here; and so, Maud, my dear, he is coming home."

"Oh, dear, how dreadful!" said Alice, shuddering.

"Oh, I have no doubt the voyage will set him up again; it always does," said Mr. Scudamore.

"But," said Alice, "we have not heard from Alberic; how is that?"

"My letter came by Marseilles," said Mr. Scudamore; "but I can tell you that your brother is very well, though he was with the lines at this siege, and in a perfect shower of shot and shell; where, you know, Queen Maud, he had no business to be!"

"I know—I am glad of it!" cried Maud, with great animation; "it is what I should like myself. What a beautiful sight a siege must be! And a man is more a man who has once looked Death in the face!"

"Listen to Queen Maud!" said Mr. Scudamore, laughing; "I hope you will bear that in mind when you see Dick!"

"How needless!" exclaimed Alice; "how unkind to us, to put himself in such danger. Oh, Maud, don't praise him for it when you write!"

"What the child says is very true," remarked Mr. Scudamore; "he

was out of his place; it is not his *métier;* if he had been knocked on the head, he would have got no thanks; but you and I, Maud, think it is very natural, for all that."

"Here comes the white horse," said Alice.

"On my word, I am sometimes tempted to think with Mistress Thorne that the child is not blind," said Mr. Scudamore.

Mr. Warrenne, at the sight of the white horse, now folded the letter carefully, and returned it to Mr. Scudamore.

"I see no reason, my dear friend," he said, "why he should not recover this injury; but I could not pronounce an opinion with any confidence without seeing the patient."

Then mounting the white horse, he inclined his head to Karl, who held the bridle, with that tranquil courtesy which always distinguished his manner, and rode slowly through the gate.

"A good horse and trusty," said Maud, "though not quite an Orelia: perhaps, grandfather, you did not happen to know that Orelia was the courser of Don Roderick?"

"Not I, 'faith!" said Mr. Scudamore; "I say, Queen Maud, look here!"

As he spoke, he placed under her eye a passage in the letter, which he had folded back.

"Mrs. Creswick and Mr. Courtenay," said Dinah, opening the drawing-room door.

"Ah, how do you do?" said Mr. Courtenay, as he entered; "I am come to see if you have any more peas to be gathered."

Maud started and looked up, all crimson, from the letter, made no reply to Mr. Courtenay's considerate proposal, but went up straight to Mrs. Creswick.

"Mr. Scudamore kindly bringing you news from India?" said Mrs. Creswick, seeing the sheet of thin paper in that gentleman's hand.

"Yes, Madame," said Mr. Scudamore, taking off his hat; "and now I leave them in such good hands, I will wish you all good morning. And, Queen Maud," he added, lowering his voice to a whisper, and tapping the letter which he held, "don't you listen to that fellow yonder. Remember, Dick will be here before Christmas!"

"Nonsense," said Maud, turning abruptly from the window.

"And what made you knock up so soon last night, Miss Alice?" asked Courtenay of the younger sister.

"I was very tired," said Alice; "I am not used to sitting up so late."

"Late! It was not one o'clock!"

"That is late for me," said Alice, smiling.

"And late for papa," said Maud, "who has to do his work next day, whether he sits up or not."

"Were you singing?" asked Mrs. Creswick, seeing the harmonium open.

"Yes, we were trying a bit from a Mass of Pergolesi," said Alice; "it is such a sweet movement!"

"Will you let me hear it?" asked Mrs. Creswick.

It was a duet, and Maud looked cross; but Alice, who was so familiar with music as not to mind it any more than netting or plaiting straw before strangers, rose at once, saying:

"I am sure we shall be happy, if you will excuse a little hoarseness on my part, for when I am tired my voice always goes."

Courtenay hastened to hand her to the instrument; but she smiled gently, and said, "I find my own way best. I am going to look for the book."

"And of what use is the book to you?" asked Courtenay as she placed it on the stand.

"It is for Maud," said Alice; "she is apt to forget the words."

"And how do you learn to play a new piece?"

"Maud reads it over to me, as you would read a page of poetry until you knew it."

"You would not know what to do without your sister?"

"Without her!" exclaimed Alice, with a gesture of terror. "Oh, no!"

"But when she marries?"

"Oh, Maud will never marry," said Alice, seating herself contentedly at the harmonium; "she is not rich enough."

"Do you play the piano also?" asked Courtenay.

"Yes, I learned on the piano; but the harmonium is so nice for sacred music that papa saved up and bought me one," said Alice, with her usual simplicity.

"And who is this Dick that I hear talked of?" asked Courtenay.

"Dick? Oh, only a joke of Mr. Scudamore's; we have never even seen him!" said Alice, beginning to play the symphony.

Maud came up to her, and they sang the duet.

"Very sweet, indeed!" said Mrs. Creswick; "one seldom hears such singing. But I am going to be very exacting—I am going to ask Maud for the 'Roman Girl's song.'"

"It does not go well with the harmonium, and the piano is in the dining-room," said Maud; "and I had rather sing it another day."

"Will you sing this 'Agnus Dei'?" asked Courtenay, taking up a piece of music from the harmonium.

"That belongs to Alice," said Maud quietly: and going to the table she took up her work, and seated herself beside Mrs. Creswick.

"And I must say good-morning," said Mrs. Creswick, rising.

"Oh, Mrs. Creswick," said Alice, "do look at this rare orchis before you go. Mr. Scudamore brought it yesterday for papa."

Mrs. Creswick stepped to the window-seat and examined the flower. Maud remained by the table, working in silence.

"You sing divinely," said Courtenay, coming up to her.

"All young ladies do," returned Maud coldly.

"I tell you plainly what I think," said Courtenay, with much earnestness; "I wish to heaven you thought of me in any one respect as I do of you."

Maud coloured, and bent her head over her work.

"I see you shun me," he continued. "Deal frankly with me! Have I no power to alter your sentiments towards me? Is it in vain?"

His voice faltered; Maud withdrew her hands, which he had taken in the eagerness of his appeal, and hurried out of the room.

"It won't do," he said, coming abruptly up to Mrs. Creswick; "I go back to town to-morrow!"

(*To be continued.*)

ANSWERED.

"Ah, where," she asked, "does the butterfly
That flits in the sunshine, dwell?
And is it a song, or is it a sigh,
That floats from the ring-dove's dell?

"And what do the light winds say as they roam,
With their murmur so soft and low?
And the foxglove, is it the fairies' home
As it used to be long ago?

"And do they steal out on a starry night,
When nobody sees or hears?
And weep to depart with the dawn's first light?
And the dewdrops, are they their tears?

"And what is the tale that the whispering wheat
Keeps telling the passer-by?
And why does the rose always smell most sweet
Just before it is going to die?"

And so, with her young soul ever astir,
The bright summer long she basked,
Till the Father Omniscient sent for her,
And answered her all she asked!

William Toynbee.

IN HOUR OF NEED.

By the Author of "Gentleman Stephens," etc.

WALES of to-day deviates far more from the self of the early part of the century, than does its neighbour England. To those whose primitive customs had been preserved from generation to generation in the wilds of mountains, and the thinly-populated country districts, railways had more novelty to bring than in regions educated up to a more equal standard. At first, changes, fashions, punctuality, and the civilising effect of new-found conveniences of transit and communication penetrated slowly, but at present date Wales has adapted itself to them with tolerable completeness, and bids fair soon to attain to the ordinary world's dead level, in which so much individuality and picturesqueness get lost.

Before this consummation is quite reached, it may be as well to turn over any stores of memory that yet keep images of Wales's earlier self to see if anything worth preserving may be found among them. For any such in my possession I am largely indebted to my friend of yore, Miss Morris, who has already been introduced to the reader in these pages,* shrewd and cheery, *Celtic* and loving; and that many of her annals and anecdotes were coloured by the fact that the Welsh are an intensely religious people, the following pages will show.

I was staying with her in the heart of the country when the dialogue in question took place, and would that I could bring to life again the homely charm of the old-fashioned room where we sat, and the gifted language of her who told the story. What made that language deserve such a name it were hard to tell, for eloquence was unthought of by the speaker, but the quaint, ever apposite phrases of which she made use, the transitions of mood and the mimicry (never coarse or unkind) that lent dramatic power to her recitals, could chain the attention of a roomful of listeners of varied ages and conditions, and can be conveyed by no more fitting word.

It was a Sunday afternoon, and I was ensconced in a deep window seat in Miss Morris's best parlour, looking out across green and garden to the road and country-side beyond.

She sat in a horsehair arm-chair near, in matronly cap and black silk dress. Our Sunday books were scattered round us, and now we read and now we talked, and so long-drawn-out and pleasant was the time that if there were only sixty minutes to the hour then, I think the clocks of to-day must tick to some different measure.

I had just been watching come leisurely into sight, and pass out of it, the homely figure of a Dissenting minister, riding by on a pony that knew better than to exert its full powers under so unexacting a

* "When the Century was Young."—*Argosy*, August 1892.

master. The scene was the heart of Wales where such sights are familiar, and the preacher probably going from dinner at one comfortable farm-house to tea at another, before doing duty at some neighbouring chapel. Many a prayer has been offered, many a text pondered by such a rider in such a country lane; where watercress and saxifrage have leave to make broad bordering to each tiny brook, and meditation finds its right atmosphere in the consciousness of mountains ever near.

My thoughts, being a good deal "to let" that afternoon, followed the preacher out of sight. I knew little of the characteristics of his class, and had probably never spoken to one such preacher in my life. Miss Morris, however, knew everybody and everything in the district, and stood, moreover, in that position between the gentry and farmer class that forms so convenient and, under favouring circumstances, so happy a link between them.

"What is your opinion of Dissenting parsons?" I asked her now, after the sweeping manner of youth; "are they really good men or only humbugs?"

"Well, one cannot give a yes or no exactly to that," said Miss Morris, with a smile. "I suppose, in speaking of a collection of anything, from kings down to shillings, there will be bad as well as good among them. There *are* hypocritical men, of course, among these preachers, ambitious, domineering ones—I have known several—and selfish, grasping ones who deserve to be called, like a Davis I once heard of, '*Davis byd hwm*' (Davis of this world), but they are only some. There have been, and there are, as good men in their body as ever were the Apostles themselves—humble-minded, honest, and self-denying. They are poor, as a rule, you know, and in some of their denominations many work hard at their trades in the week-time, yet none are more ready to help those who are in need. We Welsh are mostly theologians; but some of these preachers are such students of the Bible, and so spiritually-minded, that they might rise to the highest position with greater advantages."

"They have not much education, then," I said.

"They had not much formerly, unless just here and there, but in these days that is improved. Their colleges are well seen after, and I hear the standard of education gets higher and higher. I only hope the spiritual one keeps up with it, but it would be difficult to outshine or even come near the saintly lives led by some preachers in the past, such as Williams of Pantycelyn. He was one who 'hoped all things' for all men whoever was not. I told you what he said of the man falling over the bridge?"

"No; what was that?" I asked.

"A poor man had committed suicide by throwing himself from a bridge, and some of those who knew how charitably-minded Williams was, said to him, just to try him, 'Well, for *that* sinner, at any rate, there can be no hope.' 'No hope!' said he, quite indignantly.

'Why not? Who can tell what passed between him and his Maker between the parapet and the water!'" *

"I should have loved that dear old man!" I said. "If all Dissenters were like that, many might go to learn from them. And their Welsh singing is almost better than ours at church. At least it sounds so beautiful from outside, that I often stop to listen to it, passing their chapels. Do most of the preachers know English, Miss Morris?"

"I daresay all do now, but it was not such a matter of course in days I can recall. Oh, no! many of them were very uncivilised then—simple-minded, too, as children. Dear me!" said Miss Morris, with one of those involuntary laughs of memory, that looking back on life often brought her—sometimes ending with a sigh. "I remember a poor young man—one of the preachers at some great meetings that lasted several days. He was entertained with others at a respectable farm-house where the people kept a good table, and did things quite nicely for that grade of life. Plenty of young people were there, and so was I."

"You are a Churchwoman," said I; "but it seems to me you always set a splendid example in having so many friends among the Dissenters."

"I am sure I do not know about that, my dear," said Miss Morris, finding it difficult to deny a fact well known in the country-side; "but living in Wales people would cut down their friends a good deal leaving the Dissenters out. Oh, it is a pity—a pity!" she went on, a moment later, kindling into fervour, "it should ever be otherwise, when the things we agree about are so great and everlastingly important, and what we differ in such trifles in comparison. Why should enmity be felt because our outward forms of worship are not quite the same? But I must not tire you with it all . . . So about that young man. He wanted to be polite to all the world, poor fellow, and would go round shaking hands with every one, however full the room; and with time short and good things waiting to be eaten it was more ceremonious than convenient. At last, Mrs. Williams, the farmer's wife, determined to give him a hint in dismissing him for the night.

"'Never mind, how-d'ye-do, and good-bye *every* time, Mr. Evans,' she said to him aside; 'just *Pec-o-Pen* will do, you know.'

"*Pec-o-Pen* means a nod of the head with us in the country . . . To be sure! How some little trumpery will stay in the mind when so many better things are forgotten. We made up verses about that young man, and I remember some of them even now. They began with a description of him:

"A preacher he and well inclined
To live as should all preachers,
And set example fit and right
To all his fellow-creatures.

* The writer is not sure that this true anecdote is not attributed to the wrong preacher.

"But then we went on to hint he might with advantage have a little more worldly wisdom, and related how tiresome it was, with feasting and company all about, to be interrupted for ever by his going round shaking hands with every one.

"Saying, 'How d'-ye-do, Miss Mally?'
And, 'How d'-ye-do, Miss Nance?'
Till with impatience where she stood
Each ready was to dance!

"Of course, however, this trouble Mrs. Williams hoped she had set right by her advice. But, oh no! Next morning came, and with it Mr. Evans, but round went he as laboriously as ever with only one difference, about which our song goes on:

"For '*Pec-o-Pen*,' says he to all,
And warmly grasps each hand
Of those who all-impatient sit,
Or thrice-impatient stand.
And, 'Pec-o-Pen, Miss Mally,'
And, 'Pec-o-Pen, Miss Bess;'
So though the words were different, he
Detained them none the less!"

We laughed, and after a few more reminiscences Miss Morris sat looking far out of the window in silence, half smiling still, and with a concentrated gaze in her eyes—the "exploring look" described in Sir Walter Scott's when telling a story—as if the records of the past were written in small type that asked for careful study.

After a while she spoke again, evidently following some track of thought just left.

"Indeed there have been good men among the preachers. Many of the seven thousand who did not bow the knee to Baal were among them in those days a century back, when the Church was so lifeless. Fashion was very godless just then, and the kind of sermons expected and praised were full of deep theology that few understood and fewer were any the better for, but Wesley and Newton had followers among the Welsh preachers, then and after, who came no whit behind them in excellence."

"I fancy them like Parson Adams," I said, "and the Vicar of Wakefield."

"Yes," said Miss Morris, "they were very like them, with just one added touch of interest to my mind in having a more *poetical* kind of spirituality. I sometimes have the notion that religion must come easier to Celts than to Saxons—if it is not wrong to say so. But imagination is a great help to faith, and it must be difficult, one would say, for the matter-of-fact ones to believe that God's dealings with the world which at present are so *unseen*, although so real, go on quite as much as in Bible days. To our *Welsh* feelings it comes natural enough, and it is no such hard matter to see His hand

moving in the great and little things of life. They say we are superstitious, and may be a little right, but that would not be the fit word to use for the kind of thing I mean. Did I ever tell you of that Methodist preacher in North Wales taking the money to Machynlleth?"

"No," said I; "how was it?"

"I forget all about him beyond that he was a preacher called John Jones, who lived when this happened at Caergwrle," said Miss Morris. "There had been a collection made there towards building chapels, and the money was to be delivered at a meeting at Machynlleth. Jones the preacher was a very good man, known to be as honest as daylight, and the money was given to him to take care of and carry to the meeting. It amounted to fourteen pounds, which in those days and in such a poor country was quite a large sum. Well, the time of the meeting came, and off went Jones, going on his journey through Merionethshire, where his road led past Bwlch-y-groes, up and down hill between the great mountains—and it is a mountainous as well as very beautiful country—indeed the one follows the other as far as my taste goes. It was his shortest way, but very lonely, particularly between Llanuwchllyn and Llanymowddwy, and hilly and heavy and troublesome altogether. A *diflas* * way to travel, as we say, and so he felt it, but plodded on and told himself he had much more reason to be thankful and calm than to sigh and fear at every turn of the road. It was cold, however, among the mountains, very cold, and at last he halted at a public-house at Llanuwchllyn to refresh himself and his horse.

"In the bar-room of the inn a man—not particularly well-favoured—was sitting, and after watching Jones for a while and seeing what he ordered, began to talk to him. Jones was simple as a child, and very soon the man got out of him not only where he was going, but what took him there, and everything else he chose to ask. Presently the stranger got up and went away without remark to anyone to draw attention to his movements, and by and by the preacher, well warmed and rested, mounted his pony and began to climb the next hill. Forward he rode, his mind full of good thoughts, and at first he felt much cheerfulness. But after he had gone some way and was far from any person or house, with only mountain sheep grazing on the wild slopes round, that grew gloomy with every passing shadow from the clouds, who should he see before him but the man who had spoken to him at the public-house. He knew him again at once, and with no great feeling of pleasure, recognising him more easily that he carried a new *gryman* (reaping-hook) wrapped about, as they often are when new, with a wisp of hay. The man walked slowly, looking carefully about him as though to make sure there was no one coming after them, or before, or anywhere else, and when the preacher drew near he began taking the hay off the gryman."

* *Diflas*—pronounced *divlas*—cheerless, dreary, without pleasure.

"Oh, the poor preacher!" I exclaimed. "How frightened he must have been!"

"He was, indeed, for he had not liked the man's appearance, though one would not have thought it from his trusting him so in conversation, and the look of him now was very suspicious, and the way he kept preparing the gryman and watching had something in it, he thought, quite bloodthirsty and dreadful. Of course the robbery of the money was what he feared, and well he might in such a lonely place. Should he turn back or not? he asked himself; and Duty seemed to answer he must go on to the meeting. Yes; but not without prayer. *That*, he felt, would be madness, and so he prayed to God with all his strength.

"'O Lord,' he said, 'for Thy sake came I to this dreadful place; no message had I myself this way. I only brought *Thy* message to further the cause of religion. More than that, the money itself is Thine, only given me to keep till wanted for Thy service. Because Thou hast led me to this spot Thyself, and on Thy own business, I resign myself entirely to Thy will. Help me, O Lord, if Thou wilt, and save Thy money; but if not, do with it and do with me, dear Lord, as seemeth Thee good.'

"With all his soul he prayed and spoke to God as to a 'very present help' in the solitude of the everlasting hills, and indeed help was needed at once, for now he must overtake the man, who, with the gryman cleared and held up in his hand, stood waiting to receive him.

"It was a terrible moment, and the preacher, who had no pretensions whatever to any but *spiritual* bravery, felt his heart quake. How to defend himself he had no idea, and thought there was nothing for it, since he had been a man of peace all his days and knew nothing of fighting, but to resign himself to the robber's hands, and hope he might overlook the money. All of a sudden, however, before anything had time to happen, the swift tread of a horse was heard, and looking back on the road just travelled, the two men saw what the preacher afterwards described as a 'great gentleman on a grey horse, galloping on the points of the horse's hoofs, and as fast as possible.'

"Nearer and nearer he came, and the robber, with a look of astonishment on his face, moved hastily aside from his intended victim.

"With a prayer of thanksgiving, the poor preacher began to draw breath again in comfort; here indeed was protection such as he had not dared to expect, and under its shadow he could go on his way with safety and gladness.

"He shook up his little horse and hastened after the gentleman, and seeing them go on together, the robber turned sullenly the other way, and when the preacher looked back it was to see him putting back the hay on the reaping-hook."

"There could not be much doubt," I said; "he had had a narrow escape of feeling its edge in that desolate place!"

"Not much, indeed," said Miss Morris, "and I always seem to see them in those lonely mountains so full of awe—the robber skulking off and the homely figure of the preacher urging his little horse after the gentleman on his beautiful grey. Well, after a while, and being of a sociable turn, he thought he would speak to his companion, who was riding slower now. He cleared his throat by way of beginning.

"'Are you going far on this road, sir?' he asked, cheerfully; but receiving no answer fancied he had not been heard.

"'How far is it to Llanymowddwy, sir?' he tried next, speaking a little louder, but with no better success than before. The stranger looked straight ahead, riding on in perfect silence. On this, thinking he must be an Englishman, he dropped the Welsh he had been using, and spoke in English.

"'It is very cold, sir, on the mountains, is it not?' but the gentleman took no notice whatsoever, making as though he did not hear or Welsh or English.

"After this, the minister gave up all attempt at making friends, and journeyed on silently beside his protector. And by and by they came to the high road near some houses, and there the preacher (to use his own words again) '*lost* the gentleman between his hands;' where or when he went he could not say, as he did not go backwards or forwards it seemed, but was simply—*gone*.

"And a great fear fell on him. A strange kind of suspicion had all along lurked in his mind, and he asked himself now, What does this mean? And as answer to that question he felt as sure as if he had been told it that the Lord had heard his prayer, and sent His angel to deliver him and the money from the bloody man, and by saving his life had owned him for His servant. That thought his heart cherished to the end of his days. With tears of humble thankfulness he went on his journey without one shadow remaining of anxiety or fear, and reached Machynlleth safely. At the meeting he told what had happened, bidding all there thank the Almighty for befriending them, for it was He alone had kept the money no less than himself out of evil hands.

"And to think, said he, he had been foolish and bold enough to *talk* to an angel! 'And if I had done so about Christ or Heaven, perhaps he would have favoured me and spoken in return. But I did not try him with the right text, you see, so that honour was not granted me, and little indeed did I deserve it.'

"So that is all, my dear, and when you think of answers to prayer, sometimes you may remember poor John Jones and his ride over the Merioneth mountains!"

"And it really is a true story?" I said.

"Quite true according to what the preacher believed," said Miss

Morris; "and who need doubt it was an *answer to prayer*, let the stranger be who he might? It is well for us to see God's hand in little things as well as great. It checks our impatience when events and plans go contrary, and takes away fear and anxiety as nothing else can do. For we must not be in the same place after thanking God for helping us out of some trouble, but when the next comes be just a little braver and more firm of faith to meet it. And what an interest it gives to everything to believe that God is behind all, and that nothing happens by chance or without reason! As for ourselves and others being used without our knowledge, as the stranger on the horse perhaps was, to carry out His plans, I cannot help fancying in all reverence that our God takes *pleasure* in working grand ends out of unconscious means. Did I ever repeat you those beautiful lines about coral insects out of Montgomery's 'Pelican Island'?

> "Each wrought alone, yet all together wrought;
> Unconscious, not unworthy, instruments,
> By which a hand invisible was rearing
> A new creation in the secret deep.
> Omnipotence wrought in them, with them, by them,
> Hence what Omnipotence alone could do
> Worms did . . . . . All
> Life's needful functions, food, exertion, rest,
> By nice economy of Providence
> Were overruled to carry on the process,
> Which out of water brought forth solid rock.

"Why, we know something of the interest of making unconscious things serve our ends even in our little experience: and after all, we *are* made in His image, so why should not some of our sensations in a dim kind of way bear a likeness to His? Anyhow, it would be a great joy and gratification hereafter to find one had been used to help and protect some one, even unconsciously, like the stranger on the grey horse."

"But do you believe *yourself* it was an angel?" I persisted.

"My dear, I do," said she, "if you want my real opinion."

"*Then* so do I," I said, "and always will!"

THE DOOR FLEW OPEN AND MRS. THORNE HURRIED INTO THE ROOM.

THE ARGOSY.

APRIL, 1893.

THE ENGAGEMENT OF SUSAN CHASE.

By Mrs. Henry Wood, author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER VIII.

HOME AT LAST.

THE quay at Liverpool was alive with bustle and noise, for a large West Indian ship had just arrived after its prosperous voyage. It was a winter's day: the cold made itself felt, and the passengers, when they left the ship, were not sorry to hasten to the shelter of warm hotels.

One of them, a young and good-looking lady, only entered an hotel to leave it again. As soon as a post-chaise could be got ready, she took her seat in it, to go farther on. She looked ill and careworn, as if her health or her mind had suffered: perhaps both.

"It is an expensive way of travelling," she said to herself, "but it was better to come on. Another night of this suspense, now I am so near to them, would have seemed longer than all the rest. I wonder whether I shall hear of her! I wonder whether she has made her way to our home!"

It was about seven o'clock in the evening when she reached that home. A servant, whom she did not recognise, answered the summons at the door.

"Is Miss Chase within?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Oh, I am very glad! See to the luggage, will you? I will go on in."

"The luggage! Is it to come here, ma'am?"

"Yes," smiled the traveller. "You are strange in the house, or you would not ask it. I am Miss Susan Chase."

The girl's eyes brightened with intelligence. "Oh, ma'am! I think Miss Ursula has been expecting you. I am pleased you have got home safely, from such a long way."

Ursula Chase was sitting near the fire, reading by the light of a shaded lamp, which, though it threw its brightness on the page, cast its shadow on the room. She turned round when the door opened, and saw, indistinctly, a figure muffled up.

"Ursula, don't you know me?"

"Susan! Susan!"

Ursula, always cold and calm, was aroused out of her nature. She loved her sister Susan better than any one in the world: or, it may be more correct to say, she loved no one but Susan. She clasped her, she hurried off her wrappings, she gently pushed her into an easy-chair; and, finally, sat down in her own, and burst into tears. The equable, undemonstrative Ursula Chase!

"Forgive my being absurd, Susan; but I am so rejoiced to have you back, safe and sound."

She had set Susan on, and she was crying also, far more bitterly than Ursula. The many disagreeable points of her ill-omened visit were pressing painfully on her remembrance, and she sobbed aloud.

"I wish I had been guided by you, Ursula, and had never gone! I shall repent it as long as I live."

"Well, well, it is over and done with. I will make you some tea. You look as if you had been ill, Susan."

"I have been very ill."

"On the voyage home?"

"No. At Barbadoes."

Ursula ordered the tea in, and busied herself in making it. "I am so delighted to see you," she said, "that all my scolding has gone out of my head; but I assure you, Susan, I had prepared a sharp one for you."

"For my having gone out?"

"No. Those old bygones must be bygones. For not having come home with Mrs. Carnagie. How could you think of remaining behind?"

Susan's heart leaped into her mouth. "Did Emma—did Mrs. Carnagie come here on her return?"

"Yes. She is here now."

"Now! In the house?"

"Not in the house. She is spending the day at the Ashleys'."

"Did she say why I did not come with her?" inquired Susan.

"I could not get from her why you did not come—or, indeed, why she came herself. There is no cordiality between us. Had I been here alone, I should have been tempted to refuse to receive her. But Henry happened to be at home then, and was pleased to welcome her, and it is his house, not mine. When he went away again, he charged me to make her comfortable as long as she liked to stay here. I questioned her as little as possible, but the excuses she gave sounded frivolous to me—that you were not ready, and stopped to nurse Mr. Carnagie, who was going to have a fever. It struck me that she

ought to have assumed the authority vested in a married woman, and insisted on your returning with her. Susan, I have said that I am not going to scold you now; but Mr. Carnagie's house was not quite the place for you, unsanctioned by the presence of his wife."

"No, it was not," spoke Susan, in resentful tones, for Emma's heartless conduct aroused every spark of indignation within her. "She should have told you the truth—that she gave me no chance of coming with her. Ursula! she ran away from Barbadoes."

Ursula had the teapot in her hand, preparing to pour out the tea. She put it down, and turned her eyes on Susan. "Ran away!"

"Clandestinely. We knew no more of her leaving than you did. She dressed for an evening party, went to it—as I supposed—and never came home again. The next day we found that she had sailed for England."

"And her reason?" imperiously demanded Ursula, who had never any charity to spare for ill-doing.

"I have not seen her since, you know. She and Mr. Carnagie were not very happy together."

"That is more than likely," responded Ursula, in a marked tone. "But Mr. Carnagie ought to have told you, if she did not. Of course," she added, an unpleasant idea obtruding itself, "she did not come without his sanction?"

"Yes; and without his knowledge also, Ursula. And what made it worse, he was sickening for a fever; and, for all she knew, he might have died in it."

"That's the fever she has hinted at. Which you, she says, remained to nurse."

"I did help to nurse him through it. And took it myself, and nearly lost my life."

Ideas crowded fast upon the mind of Ursula Chase. Her brow contracted. "Were you laid up there—in his house—alone?"

"Not alone. A friend, a widow lady, came to be with me the day after Emma left. And when I was well enough, I removed to her house until I sailed."

"It is the most incomprehensible story altogether!" uttered Ursula. "I mean Emma's proceedings. What did she leave Barbadoes for? What does she do in England? All I have heard her say about it is, that her health was bad, and she wanted a change. It appeared to be good enough when she came here."

"There was nothing the matter with her health. Ursula—the worst part of the history remains behind: she did not come away alone."

"I know that. Ruth came with her. The girl has leave for a week now, and is gone to see her friends."

"I do not mean Ruth. She had made herself——" Susan hesitated: between her strong hope that Emma might be innocent, and the obligation that was upon her to disclose the plain truth, she

was somewhat at a loss how to frame her words—"Emma had made herself conspicuous with a friend of Mr. Carnagie's; had been too much in his company; too free in her manners with him. He"—Susan dropped her voice to a whisper—"left Barbadoes with her."

Ursula turned white. And her tone, as she hastily rejoined, rose to a shriek.

"His name was not Chard? Susan, it was not Chard?"

"Captain Chard," was Susan's sad rejoinder.

Ursula's face presented a picture of dismay. After a pause, she spoke.

"He came here with her."

"Came here!" echoed Susan. "Did he stay here?"

"No. A couple of hours only. She introduced him to Henry as a friend of Mr. Carnagie's, who had taken charge of her over. Susan! she has a letter from that man every morning—every morning of her life. One day Henry asked her who her regular correspondent was, and she acknowledged it was Captain Chard: she said he was transacting business relative to Barbadoes, and it was necessary she should be kept informed of its progress. What are we to do with her? If she is—what she may be—she shall not contaminate this house. Nor would Henry wish her to be with us."

"It may not be so," cried Susan, eagerly. "At any rate, Ursula, it is not for us so to judge her, or to proclaim it. We must wait for the explanation."

"When is it to come? What is she going to do here? How long is she going to remain?" reiterated Ursula, with a frowning brow.

Susan shook her head. "I know nothing. Mr. Carnagie is coming over."

"What for?"

"To get a divorce," she answered, in a low tone. "As he says. But if he finds no grounds——"

Ursula rose; she paced the room in excitement. "A divorced woman! what a disgrace to the family! our sister! I wish the ship had sunk with them!"

"Ursula! Do not——who's this coming in?" cried Susan, breaking off her remonstrance.

"Frances Maitland, I believe! It is like the bustle she makes. She is always coming in when she is not wanted."

Frances Maitland it was. Susan's close friend for many years. She was inexpressibly surprised to see Susan.

"To think that I should find you here! I came in to sit an hour with Ursula, knowing Emma was out to-night, and here are you!"

"Safe at home again, after all my travels and wanderings," answered Susan.

The three gathered round the fire, Susan in the easy-chair, Frances on a footstool close to her, and talked of old times and present ones. Ursula said little.

"Susan," cried Frances, at length, "is there not something wrong between Emma and her husband? It is not all blue sky, is it?"

"I have certainly seen more loving couples," was Susan's rejoinder.

"Did you ever see a more hating one? I prophesied they would have no luck. What do you think Emma said to me the other day?"

"Some nonsense, perhaps."

"I took it for sense by her tone and look. That of all the live animals walking on two legs, there was not one she detested half so much as she detested Lieutenant Carnagie."

"Emma was always given to making random assertions," returned Susan. "You know that. Something like yourself, Frances."

"Susan, are they separated?" resumed Frances, lowering her voice.

"Separated! What do you mean?"

"I do not believe she is going back to him," was Frances Maitland's answer. "I was telling her she had better invite me to go home with her to Barbadoes, and she said it was no home of hers, and never should be again. What does it all mean?"

"I am not in Emma's confidence," replied Susan. "She may have said it in a moment of pique."

"And she seems to have as little intention of staying long here. I must say one thing, however, Susan—that you were determined to have enough of your old lover's company, to remain with him, instead of coming home with Emma! If some of us giddy ones were to do such a thing, we should be called all to pieces for it."

Poor Susan felt her face flush, and she leaned her head upon her hand. Ursula aroused herself, and spoke up in the stern tone she took when displeased.

"You seem to forget my sister's fatigue, or you would not tease her to-night with absurd jokes. In all that Susan has done she has had but one motive—love to Mrs. Carnagie."

"I know that," cried Frances. "I wish we were all as pure-hearted and full of love as Susan. We cannot say as much for Emma."

Miss Maitland remained late, but Emma did not come in. When she rose to go, Ursula said she had a request to make to her.

"What is it?"

"Should you meet Mrs. Carnagie on your way, do not say that Susan has returned. We want to surprise her."

"Very well. I won't."

"*She* need not talk about having enough of a lover's company," exclaimed Ursula, as Frances left. "A pretty affair she has had herself, Susan, since you have been away."

"Indeed! A fresh one?"

"Threw herself, point blank, at the head—or the heart—of a new curate we had. She nearly tormented his life out of him; meeting him in his walks, and at the cottages, and inviting him to their house. It was too barefaced. He did not respond: and people do say that he threw up the curacy to be rid of her."

"Frances was wild to be married, years ago, and I conclude, as the time gets on, and she gets on, that her anxiety does not lessen."

"She's wild to be a simpleton," sharply retorted Ursula.

When Mrs. Carnagie was heard entering the hall, Susan rose from her seat in agitation. She could not meet her unmoved, and she laid hold of the table to steady herself.

Mrs. Carnagie came in. One amazed glance, one quick look of perplexity in her face, and then it resumed its indifference again. She had possibly anticipated the present moment, and prepared herself for it. She had recovered all her European good looks, and was prettier than ever.

"Susan! What wind blew you here? Are you alone?"—she looked round the room. "Is *he* come?"

"No. If you allude to your husband."

"He is not any husband of mine; and is not going to be again. Don't honour him so far as to give him the title."

"Are you aware, madam, what has come to my knowledge?" uttered Ursula, advancing, and planting herself before Mrs. Carnagie. "That you quitted your husband's home clandestinely, and left your sister unprotected in Mr. Carnagie's house?"

"Susan is not a child. She is old enough to protect herself," was the flippant answer.

"How *dared* you come home to *me* with your untruths—that Susan was not ready to accompany you? You did not give her the opportunity of doing so. You did not wish it."

"Perhaps I did not," returned Mrs. Carnagie.

"Emma," interposed Susan, "your conduct to me has been cruel, utterly unjustifiable and unpardonable. How could you think of quitting Barbadoes without me? of leaving me alone with Mr. Carnagie?"

"What if I did? You have not eaten each other up."

Ursula's hands tingled to inflict personal chastisement upon her, as they had sometimes done when Emma was a child. Susan spoke:—

"And your conduct was even more cruel to your husband. He was attacked with the fever, and you knew it. He had it dangerously; so dangerously that it was a mercy he did not die."

"I wish he had!" fervently uttered Mrs. Carnagie. "If praying for it would have taken him, he'd have gone, for I was doing that all the voyage over. Young Grape was on board just before we sailed, and reported that Carnagie had been sent home delirious."

Susan sat down in dismay. Even Ursula was silenced. What were they to do with her?

"Are you aware that he is following you to England?—and for what purpose?" sternly demanded Ursula.

"To get a divorce, I hope," was the cool reply. It struck Ursula dumb.

"If he has any spirit, he will sue for a divorce, that's all," added Mrs. Carnagie.

"Oh, you wicked woman!" uttered the indignant Ursula. "To come here, in brazen impudence, and bring *him* with you! That man! Did you forget, madam, that this was a respectable house—that it was once your mother's, and that it is now mine?"

"Forget it, no," said Emma; "and I am quite as respectable as you are. And so is he."

"Susan, is she mad?"

Emma advanced forward, her whole face lighted up with passion. "I have done no wrong," she said. "I left my home in the way I did to get rid of my husband, rid of his name, and to become free again. I concerted my plans with Captain Chard. When Mr. Carnagie sues for a divorce, which of course he must do, he will obtain it, for it will be unopposed, and then I shall become Captain Chard's wife. He has loved me long, and I love him. I have done no wrong," she repeated, with flashing eyes, "and Captain Chard would not lead me into it; but rather"—she dropped her voice—"than not be rid of Lieutenant Carnagie, we would run away to-morrow."

"Oh, Emma!" exclaimed Susan. "If we believe you, can you expect the world will do so?"

"It will have to. Once let the divorce be pronounced, and we shall make our assertions good. Ruth can bear good testimony, and so can others. Mr. Carnagie has had a letter before this, despatched on my arrival here, that will sting him into seeking a divorce: it was purposely worded for it."

"Are you not afraid of other consequences than a divorce?" asked Susan. "Mr. Carnagie is bitterly indignant against Captain Chard. He says he will shoot him."

"Two can play at that game," retorted Mrs. Carnagie.

"I hope," uttered Ursula, in fervent tones, "that your Captain Chard will be drummed out of the regiment. A reputable commander!"

"Too late," sarcastically rejoined Mrs. Carnagie. "He has sold out."

"The kindest thing that could have happened to you would have been a shipwreck to the bottom of the sea," repeated Ursula.

"Thank you. The waves were not of your opinion, you perceive. I hope and trust *he* may get shipwrecked coming over. It would save a world of trouble, and I and Captain Chard would hold a public rejoicing over it. Have you any more fault to find with me? Because, if not, I am going up to bed."

No reply was made, and Mrs. Carnagie quitted the room.

"Susan," muttered Ursula again, "*is* she mad? What will become of us all, in the eyes of the world?"

"Can what she says be true?" asked Susan. "I am inclined to believe it."

"What difference does it make, whether true or false?" retorted Ursula. "We know the construction that must be put on such conduct. I shall write to Henry; a letter that will bring him home. If he persists in allowing her to remain in the house, I shall leave it."

CHAPTER IX.

FRANCES MAITLAND'S ANGER.

TWELVE months more passed away, and Emma Carnagie's strange plans were bearing fruit. Mr. Carnagie had lost no time; the very ship which had brought Susan home, had also brought certain instructions from Mr. Carnagie to his solicitors, and he had followed them later. An action was forthwith commenced against Captain Chard, "Carnagie *v.* Chard." It was undefended at the trial, and judgment and damages were suffered to go by default. In early spring, seventeen months after her departure from her husband's home, Mrs. Carnagie was pronounced to have forfeited all claim to his name for ever. During the proceedings, Mrs. Carnagie had resided with one of her brothers, for Ursula had been bitter, unforgiving, and vehement.

Before the divorce was finally pronounced, Susan and Ursula were invited to spend some time with an aged relative in Wales. They accepted it readily, glad to be away from their own neighbourhood for a while: Ursula was wont to declare, every time she went out, that the people "looked at her," as if to remind her that she was the sister of Mrs. Carnagie. They were away three months, and the chief change which they found on their return was, that their rector had obtained a six months' leave of absence, and a stranger was residing in the rectory and officiating for him.

On the following day, Sunday, they went to church as usual. The new clergyman had just ascended the reading-desk. Susan looked at him: she rubbed her eyes and looked again; it was surely Mr. Leicester, whom she had left in Barbadoes! And now their gaze met, and there was no longer room for doubt.

"I like him very much!" cried Ursula, alluding to the new clergyman, as they were walking home from church after service. "I wonder who he is?"

"I can tell you," said Susan. "It is Mr. Leicester. I know him, Ursula."

"You! Where have you known him?"

"In Barbadoes. He had a church there. It was to his house I was removed from Mr. Carnagie's. You have forgotten the name, perhaps. It was his sister, Mrs. Freeman, who nursed me through the fever. They were very kind to me, and I am under great obligations to them."

"Is he married, this Mr. Leicester?"

"No. At least he was not then."

"There was a lady in the parsonage pew."

A quick step behind them, a step Susan thought she remembered, and she turned round to find her hand taken by Mr. Leicester, a tall, fine man, with an intellectual countenance. What with old recollections, and perhaps conscious present feelings, Susan felt her face become one crimson glow, as he held her hand and looked into her eyes.

"My sister Ursula," she said, turning them away. "I do not know when I have been so much surprised as to-day, Mr. Leicester."

"To see me officiating in your own parish," he laughed. "When you left me far away, not so very long ago."

"Have you come over on leave of absence?"

"I have come over for good. My health has been very indifferent for twelve months past, so I resigned my appointment there. I am in expectation of preferment in England, but meanwhile this offered and I took it."

When they arrived at their house, he entered with them. Ursula went upstairs to take off her things, Susan remaining in the drawing-room with Mr. Leicester.

"May I inquire after your sister?" he said in low tones.

"She is just married again. They were married the instant it was possible after the divorce was obtained. You must have heard that amongst our friends here, for I have no doubt they have been full of it."

"Yes, it has been a prolific topic," replied Mr. Leicester. "The marriage was also in the newspapers."

"In every newspaper in the United Kingdom, I think," returned Susan, her tone betraying her vexation. "All possible publicity that could be given to it, Captain and Mrs. Chard gave. They sent out cards and cake to every family they knew."

"They are travelling, are they not?"

"They have gone to Germany, I believe. But we have held no communication with themselves. My sister Ursula resents Emma's conduct deeply."

"But if Mrs. Carnagie is to be believed, there was little to resent. So the neighbourhood here says."

"I think she is to be believed; indeed, there appears to be no doubt about it. But we feel that, even at its best, she has brought great disgrace into the family, and Ursula will never forget or forgive it."

"Mr. Carnagie is also about to marry again."

"Is he?" exclaimed Susan.

"You remember those wealthy planters on that large estate a few miles off Barbadoes?"

"Yes. The Prance estate, you mean."

"He is going to marry Miss Prance."

"Why, she was a half-caste!" uttered Susan, after a pause of amazement.

Mr. Leicester nodded. "It has caused a good deal of surprise in Barbadoes. She will have a very large fortune."

"It was said she was very cruel," observed Susan, "and would beat her slaves with her own hand."

"And I know that to be true," said Mr. Leicester. "However, Mr. Carnagie is to marry her. He was only waiting for the necessary time to elapse after the divorce."

"I heartily wish him more happiness than in his last marriage," said Susan; "and perhaps he may find it, although she is half-caste When she is an Englishman's wife she may be taught that slaves are possessed of human feelings, as she is, and learn to treat them kindly."

"Did you see Mr. Carnagie when he was in England?"

"Yes. He came here; but it was only a passing visit," answered Susan. "I was glad when he went back again; I was always fearing that he and Captain Chard might meet. Mr. Carnagie came over intending to challenge him; but his lawyers told him that, if he took the law into his own hands, he would not get his divorce. I suppose they only said it to prevent bloodshed. How is Mrs. Freeman? Did she come home with you?"

"No; she remains in Barbadoes. She is Mrs. Grape now. I have an elder sister staying here with me—Miss Leicester."

"Do you like the neighbourhood?"

"Not so well as I had anticipated. I shall like it better now I have an old friend in it," he added, with a smile. And Susan's colour deepened again, for which she could have boxed her own ears.

The time went on. The neighbourhood, to whom Frances Maitland's flirting propensities were nothing new, grew into the habit of joking her about Mr. Leicester. She was little loth. Anxious as she was to be married—and as it was well known that she was—often as she had striven to accomplish the desired end by setting her cap (the popular phrase) at single men, she had never set it so strenuously, or met with one who had so won upon her regard, as Mr. Leicester; and she grew to show it too plainly. Frances haunted him. Go where he would, he met her—in the park, in the village, amongst the poor, and in the vestry of his church. For Frances had constituted herself into a parish visitor, and had for ever some question to ask Mr. Leicester. She was very handsome, with beautiful features and brilliant dark eyes, and, like too many other handsome girls, thought herself irresistible.

And yet, with all this, she did not get on. No, do what she would, she did not advance a step nearer her hope than she had been

at the commencement. Mr. Leicester was always civil, always polite, often conversed with her, but still his manner would not betray a deeper interest. "I wonder," thought Frances to herself, "whether he has any attachment elsewhere! Perhaps he has left some one behind him in Barbadoes."

"You are wasting your time," Miss Ashley abruptly observed to her one hot summer's day, as she came upon Frances sitting in the park.

"What in?" inquired Frances.

"Running after Mr. Leicester."

"Well, I'm sure!" uttered Frances. "What next? I don't run after him."

"The sun does not shine, does it, Frances? It's not opposite to you at this moment?" ironically returned Miss Ashley. "Why, what are you sitting on this bench for now but to catch him as he goes by from the cottages? My dear, our perceptive faculties, in these parts, are not buried in a wood."

"I don't care whether they are buried or not," angrily retorted Frances. "I suppose I may sit in the open air on a day when it's too hot to remain indoors without having covert motives imputed to me."

"Don't put yourself out. I only say you are wasting your time; and you ought to be obliged to me for telling you, as you can't see it for yourself. I think you are buried in a wood, Frances, or you would see where Mr. Leicester's hopes are fixed. Love's eyes are blind, they say."

"What do you mean? Fixed where?"

"He is nothing to me, so I have my sight about me, and have suspected the truth some time. I should not wonder but it was her being here brought him into the place."

"Who? Who?" impatiently demanded Frances, stamping her foot.

"Susan Chase."

"Susan Chase?" repeated Miss Maitland. "What has she to do with Mr. Leicester?"

"Nothing—as yet. But I think it will come to it. They like each other."

Frances Maitland turned away her head. "How do you know this?"

"I was speaking to Susan one day about her having known Mr. Leicester in Barbadoes, and she grew confused and red, as she had never grown before but at the name of Mr. Carnagie. It set me wondering. I have watched them since, and I feel sure he likes her. There is a peculiar tone in his voice when he speaks to her, a gentleness in his manner, which he gives to no one else. And he is with her often. He makes his health a plea for avoiding general visiting, but he can go there and pass most of his evenings. You have been wasting your time, Frances."

"She can't expect to marry after her affair with Mr. Carnagie," spoke Frances, in a fury—"especially Mr. Leicester. The idea of her taking in a clergyman!"

"That's past and gone. The Carnagie affair need be no impediment to her marrying another. I don't see that it need."

"Don't you?" was the sulky answer. "Then I do."

Bessy Ashley laughed.

"When Susan was engaged to him for years, was wild after him! After their wedding-day being fixed twice over, once before he went to Barbadoes, and three years afterwards, when he returned from it, and she loving him all that time, and pining after him! You call that no impediment," persisted Frances Maitland. "Then I do."

"Not a bit of it. Neither would you, if you were not prejudiced," returned Miss Ashley.

The conversation had turned Frances Maitland's blood to gall. Susan Chase to win the prize for which she had been striving! Not if she could prevent it. She sat on, after Miss Ashley left her, nourishing her jealousy, nourishing her resentment, working herself into a positive fury.

Presently Mr. Leicester was discerned crossing the corner of the park. Frances rose and met him, and then turned to pursue her walk by his side.

"It is a hot day," he observed.

"So hot that I hoped to find a little coolness strolling about under these shady trees," replied Frances, whose heart was beating wildly, and whose colour went and came. She was just in the mood to let her tongue commit itself, if she were not careful.

"I have come from the cottages," said Mr. Leicester. "The poor people have been pleased to tell me they shall be sorry to lose me."

"I dare say they will be. Our rector does not trouble himself about cottage people. But you are not going yet, Mr. Leicester?"

"I came for six months, and have been here five."

"But—was there not some hope given to us that you might remain longer?" cried Frances, looking at him, and speaking quickly. "We heard so."

"The rector wrote to propose it, and the bishop would have been agreeable. That must be what you heard."

"Yes. Will you not remain?"

He looked at her in turn, and smiled. "I cannot if I would; though I did not know that until this morning. The post brought me the welcome news that I have been appointed to a living, and I must take possession of it as soon as I can be released from this."

Frances Maitland's heart sank within her. If he left without speaking, there would be good-bye to her hopes for ever.

"What shall we all do without you?" she said, banteringly.

"Nay; what shall I do without you? I think that will be the real question." But he only spoke generally, and Frances knew it

"What will Susan Chase do without you?" whispered Frances, unable longer to repress her bitter jealousy. "Report says that she will especially miss Mr. Leicester."

"Report is very kind to say anything so flattering," was his reply; and Frances saw the hot flush mount to his brow.

"And that Mr. Leicester will miss Miss Chase. Is it so?" she cried, with all the vehemence of her ill-regulated nature. But she was beside herself that day.

"Miss Maitland must pardon me. I do not see that I need satisfy gossip on the score of my private affairs."

"You cannot have serious thoughts of Susan Chase," she continued, in agitation; "or, if you have, you do not know her previous history."

"What is her previous history?" demanded Mr. Leicester, surprised into putting the hasty question.

"Susan's love was wasted long ago; she has none left to bestow upon you. Wasted on Lieutenant Carnagie."

"On Lieutenant Carnagie!" uttered the astonished Mr. Leicester. "Her sister's husband?"

"She loved him passionately for years. She was engaged to him, and their wedding-day was fixed. And at the last he left her, and chose her sister. A woman who has been betrothed in that way, and who has no love left, is not a suitable object for your affection, Mr. Leicester."

He was evidently absorbed in the story.

"She could not forget him even when he was Emma's husband. She followed them to Barbadoes. When Mrs. Carnagie returned to England she remained there with him, in his house. What do you suppose kept her from returning with her sister but her unconquerable love for him? Do you hear it, sir? She allowed Emma to sail without her, and remained behind with Mr. Carnagie. Tush!" was the scornful epithet, and very scornfully was it spoken, "Susan Chase is no fitting wife for the Reverend Mr. Leicester."

Frances Maitland had overshot her mark: many do, when urged on by ill-nature: and Mr. Leicester's countenance brightened, and a half smile arose to it.

"I do not wish to enter into Miss Chase's affairs with you, Miss Maitland, for I have not her permission to do so; but I must set you right upon one great point. The cause of her not accompanying her sister to England was not undue affection for Mr. Carnagie."

"Oh, indeed! You think so?"

"I know it, and can certify to it. Circumstances over which she had no control compelled Miss Chase to remain in Barbadoes; but she remained there under the protection of my sister, Mrs. Freeman, and our house was afterwards her temporary home until she sailed."

"Are you determined not to believe what I tell you of Mr. Carnagie?" panted Frances.

"I cannot dispute your word that Miss Chase may have been engaged to Mr. Carnagie, but it would be impossible for me to believe anything to her real prejudice. She is a single-hearted, pure-minded woman, and I speak from intimate observation of her conduct."

Furious anger, jealous resentment, rushed into the heart of Frances Maitland; scarlet mortification was shown on her face. "Perhaps you wish to avow that you love her?" she intemperately uttered.

"That is an avowal a man rarely makes to a third person," was Mr. Leicester's answer. "I can avow that my friendship for her is great, that I esteem her beyond any woman I ever met with, or probably ever shall meet."

"Then you are a blind idiot!" shrieked Frances; and she tore away from him, at a right angle, over the hot grass.

"And now for Susan," thought Mr. Leicester, after he had sufficiently digested his companion's frantic proceedings. "The sooner I speak the better."

He did not see Susan until evening. When he entered she was alone.

"Is your sister out?" he inquired.

"No," replied Susan. "She is not very well and has gone to her room for the night. She suffers very much from heat, and this hot day has completely overpowered her."

The fact was, poor Ursula Chase, tall and very stout, did suffer terribly in hot weather. So she was in the habit, on intensely hot days, of retiring early to her chamber and courting the evening breeze at the open window in the airy costume of a dressing-gown.

"Have you heard the news?" asked Mr. Leicester.

"No."

"I wonder at that, for news spreads fast in this vicinity and I mentioned it this morning."

"What is it?" asked Susan.

"That I have had a living presented to me."

"Indeed! Then you will be leaving this."

"At the month's end. I wonder whether any one will regret me?"

"Oh yes," involuntarily answered Susan. "Many will," she hastened to add.

"Susan," he said, in a lower tone, as he advanced close to her and took her hand, "must I go alone?"

She strove to take it from him, but he would not let her. "Has not the time come when I may speak again?" he whispered. "Susan, we are both leading lonely lives. Why should it be so? Had I come here and found you with any object, or probable object, of attachment, I should have abided by the old refusal, and never more have recurred to it. But it is not so, for you remain alone in the world. There have been times lately—may I speak out freely?" he

broke off to ask, "frankly, as if the undisguised heart spoke, and not the lips?"

"Yes, yes," she answered.

"Then I have at times fancied you were inclined to regret that refusal: that you were beginning to esteem me more than you did when you pronounced it."

"I could not esteem you more than I did then, Mr. Leicester," she said, in gentle tones.

"Well—esteem is too cold a word, but—I did not dare to make it warmer. The joy that hope has brought to me is great; too great to be crushed now. Oh, Susan, you must listen to me! think how long I have loved you! What caused me to leave Barbadoes? The thought of you, quite as much as my breaking health. What made me seek employment in this locality? The hope of being reunited to you."

Now, the truth was, if Susan did not repent her former rejection of Mr. Leicester immediately on its being given, she had done so very soon afterwards. That is, she repented having put a barrier to her friendship and intimacy with him. During the voyage home she had had leisure to reflect on his estimable qualities, his welcome society, his noble conduct to herself; and he gradually became the one bright spot in the sad Barbadoes reminiscence. During her more recent intercourse with him, she had learnt to love him: not, however, as she had once loved another. *That* could never be again for Susan Chase: it never is, for any one.

She stood closer to the window, pressed her forehead on its frame, and spoke in a subdued tone.

"There are circumstances in my past life, which, if known to you, would probably forbid you to think of me as you are doing. Before I relate them to you, I must premise that all you have said may be as retracted. I shall understand it as such. No, Mr. Leicester"—for he sought to take her hand again—"listen first.

"When I was eighteen, I became engaged to a young officer; our marriage was fixed, and I was to accompany him abroad. My mother's death prevented it, and he sailed without me. We corresponded for more than three years, and then he returned to fulfil his engagement. It was Lieutenant Carnagie."

Susan stopped, but Mr. Leicester made no comment.

"He returned to marry me; but, ere the wedding-day, I found that his love for me had changed into a love for my youngest sister,—a strong, uncontrollable passion, as it appeared, and she shared it. I sacrificed my own feelings, released him, and they were married."

"Go on, Susan."

"From that moment I strove to drive him from my heart: it was a hard and bitter task, but I succeeded tolerably well: and when Emma wrote that she was suffering in health, miserable, and had a presentiment of dying in her approaching illness, I thought it my duty

to go out to Barbadoes to her. Ursula would not do so. There I met you, Mr. Leicester."

"And your sister requited your kindness by quitting you in the manner she did!"

"Yes. You can understand, now, why I felt it so undesirable to be left under the roof of Mr. Carnagie. Not," added Susan, turning her truthful eyes upon him, "that any trace of former feeling remained in my heart. Oh no, that had been completely eradicated: but I felt my position an unpleasant one."

"It was so."

"And it proved so. One day after I had recovered from my illness—I wish to tell you all, Mr. Leicester—Lieutenant Carnagie so far forgot himself as to speak of our former love: he urged me to promise that it should be renewed after the divorce from my sister was obtained. I was shocked and terrified: and I told him that I would far rather marry any poor slave on his estate than I would marry him. He left me in a passion, and you came in, close upon it. It was then you—spoke to me."

"Ay, ay."

"But I answered you very differently from the way in which I answered him, though the substance was the same," she said, glancing brightly up. "I was thankful to you, Mr. Leicester, gratified by your good opinion of me; and, in one sense, regretted so to answer you, for I had begun to value your friendship. I removed to your house the same afternoon."

"And I went up the country, on an improvised mission, to rid you of my company. The time will come yet, Susan, when we shall beguile our home evenings by talking over these old days."

This remark recalled Susan. "When Mr. Carnagie was in England last year, he came here. What do you think for? To renew his prayer, that I would still become Mrs. Carnagie. I quitted his presence, and sent Ursula to answer him. She did it. That is all I have to tell you, Mr. Leicester."

"And why have you told it me, Susan?"

"It was right that you should know it. And because, knowing it, you may not think of me as you did before."

"No, I do not; I think of you more highly. I repeat, Susan, I cannot see why you have told me this. Why should your having been engaged to Mr. Carnagie render you less eligible to become my wife?"

"Because my heart's whole love was given to him," she murmured. "Because, loving him as I did, ardently, enduringly, I can never love another. I esteem you, Mr. Leicester—far more than I ever esteemed him; I like you better than I like any one; better, probably, than I ever shall like any one, even if we do not meet again after this night. I feel a pride in your upright character. I long for your society; in the daytime I wish the hours would more quickly pass on to

evening, which may bring you ; and, once in your presence, I am at rest, and look for nothing beyond it. Yet, for all this, I do not *love* you ; my love passed from me with Charles Carnagie."

Mr. Leicester drew her face from the window, drew it towards him between his hands, and gazed on it. "What more can I desire?" he asked. "My dearest, I will promise you one thing—never to be jealous of the memory of Lieutenant Carnagie."

"You are willing to take me as I am, with my worn-out heart?"

"Ay, Susan ! take you and be thankful."

"Then," she whispered, leaning forward to hide her tearful face on his breast, "hear me also promise that I will be to you a good and faithful wife. You shall never have cause to regret that my early love was given to another."

"Susan, I must pay myself for that old refusal."

"As you please."

"Frances," cried Bessy Ashley, dancing into the presence of Frances Maitland, some days later, "I am going to be bridesmaid to somebody. You are going to be asked to be another. Ursula Chase is to be the third."

"Who is going to be married?"

"Ah ! Who ! I am right, after all. It is to be directly, before the summer's over."

"Can't you speak out? Who is it?"

"Susan Chase and Mr. Leicester."

"It's not true," said Frances, turning fifty colours.

"If it's not true, may I never be a bride myself," uttered Bessy. "Just pocket your nonsense, and behave to them as a decent young lady ought to behave. It *will be :* and you know what can't be cured must be endured."

Frances Maitland did pocket it, and was one of Susan Chase's bridesmaids on her wedding-day.

And Susan saw that destiny had been kinder to her than she would have been to herself ; for she knew that, as the wife of Lieutenant Carnagie, her heart would have sought in vain for the *home* it had now found in Mr. Leicester.

THE END.

CONVERSATION.

THE end of conversation is to promote good fellowship.

There are a great many secondary aims, as the communication of knowledge, the recommendation of new truth, the spreading of news, and the discussion of political or other questions of interest. But whatever may be the topic, conversation is not well conducted unless it secures good fellowship: it must not pass into monologue, nor into dry dissertation; it must not become ill-natured or crotchety, nor must it become cold and merely polite, nor restrained and unsocial.

He is indeed a *bore* of the first order who will not allow anyone else to be heard, who monopolises the opportunity and lords it over all the rest.

To listen well is a rarer and higher accomplishment than to express oneself. Goethe well says that it is nature to express oneself, but only culture enables one to accept, as they are meant, the expressions of others. This is wise and discerning, and pierces to the very first principles of conversation.

To remain silent is to give the impression of large reserve, if the quietude is combined with any grace or sweetness of manner.

Many readers will remember the anecdote told of Coleridge; how one day he was dining, and was impressed by the quietude of his next neighbour, who listened to his silvery stream of talk with apparent enjoyment. At last, some dish of a special kind was presented, when the man in the broadest rural accent said: "Aye, them's the Johnnies for me," which dissipated the illusion. Had the man not spoken at all, he would have been credited with a power for those flashes of silence which are said to be the birthright of certain forms of genius.

Lord Bacon has said some of the wisest and shrewdest things about conversation.

To all who have "entertaining" to do, on however small a scale, these words may be offered as a *vade mecum*. He or she will not fail in any essential, if the main points here so luminously laid down are absorbed. The chief business of a host or hostess is to give the occasion, to suggest, and to bring sympathetic minds into play, so that as iron, in the language of Scripture, sharpeneth iron, so may a man the countenance of his friend. The gift for this kind of management is not inborn in many; indeed it is inborn in very few; but much can be done by self-control and practice to develop it.

So long as there is anything stiff, stilted, and distant in talking, the best result has not been reached. All who have written on conversation are agreed in this. "To talk without effort," say the

Brothers Hare in the 'Guesses at Truth,' "is after all the great charm of talking."

Yet ease isn't everything. No one can doubt that Coleridge and Hazlitt in a past age were great talkers and talked with ease; or that Lord Macaulay, and Carlyle, and De Quincey were great talkers and talked with ease; but the two former were prone to lose all sense of proportion, of that moderating power of which Bacon speaks, and failed to show the highest culture in listening patiently.

Probably it is in this sense that Goethe says, "I am an enemy to long explanations: they deceive the maker or the hearer; generally both."

The social party is not the place for Academical lectures, and he is apt to be thought either a prig or a pretender who adventures upon them. Men like Macaulay and Carlyle were privileged; but they were masters of monologue rather than of polite conversation. Their example is not to be followed.

The talk of De Quincey, according to all accounts, was more amenable to Bacon's demand. He loved to listen and desired to excite expression on the part of the company. His inborn gentleness and courtesy, no less than his humility in his desire to learn from others, sufficed to keep him up to a fine level of sympathetic consideration which he always observed.

Perhaps it was with an eye to a warning against the tendency to monologue that one wrote: "Speech builds barriers as often as it breaks them down"; which has its counterpart in this expression of Goethe, "No one would talk much in society if he were aware how often he fails to understand others." Certainly men of the type of Macaulay and Carlyle failed very often to understand others, else they would not have been so persistent in giving the impression of their own exacting egotism and self-worship.

Montaigne, in his essay on Conversation, has some very good hints. This is one: "In table-talk I prefer the merry man before the wise one, and in common conversation the most able speaker, even though he does not always mean what he says; and so of other things."

This points at one great rule. Earnestness is apt to overleap itself, and one-sided enthusiasm is almost sure to do so. The man with a hobby, the man with a grievance, the man with a cause, these are one and all, save in very exceptional cases, bad subjects for the master of conversation to manage and control.

And just as they violate harmony and fair interchange by the interposition of their egotism, so does the person who would fain lay bare his bosom and treat the party to a revelation of all his private affairs, his sufferings, and even his faults. Goethe has well said on this point: "We should never speak openly of our faults, or those of others, if we do not think thereby to effect some useful purpose."

People who garnish their conversation with expletives or inter-

jections show their vulgarity and bad taste, as well as run the risk of disgusting the very persons they are most fain to attract and amuse. But the acute observer will not fail to make his own reflections and his own use, it may be, of them in the spirit of the sentence: "Interjections, &c., are not infrequently shorthand notes of character."

Ben Jonson ("O rare Ben"), in his 'Rules for the Tavern Academy,' has these very sensible and piquant verses:—

"At the fund of our pleasure let each pay his shot,
Except some chance friend whom a member brings in;
Far hence be the sad, the lewd fop, and the sot,
For such have the plagues of good company been.

* * * * *

Let's have no disturbance about taking places
To show your nice breeding or out of vain pride;
Let the drawers be ready with wine and fresh glasses,
Let the waiters have eyes though their tongues must be ty'd.

Let the contest be rather of books than of wine,
Let the company be neither noisy nor mute,
Let none of things serious, much less divine,
When belly and head full, profanely dispute.

* * * * *

Let raillery be without malice or heat,
Dull poems to read let none privilege take;
Let no poetaster command or intreat
Another extempore verses to make.

Let argument bear no unmusical sound,
No jars interpose, sacred friendship to grieve;
For generous lovers let a corner be found,
Where they in soft sighs may their passions relieve."

A. H. Japp, LL.D.

PAOLO'S MODEL.

I.

AN artist sat one evening in his studio. Without lay the fair city of Florence, the city whose very stones and mortar are consecrated to art. The names of her great painters were written in letters of fire on his heart, and his one consuming desire was to make his own of equal glory. But the work that was to compass this was not yet started. Unfinished pieces were scattered about; his attention was engaged on none of them. The canvas stretched before him was bare, and his gaze was fastened on it as if he were trying to evolve some definite vision from vacancy.

"The Christ of my dreams!" he murmured. "How clearly His face shines from my soul's recess! His eyes full of blessing—lips just parting to utter the word which would make all own Him God. But soon as ever I put brush to canvas, it flies. The artists of old used to pray before their work. Have not I spent hours on my knees, asking for the boon of my ideal in visible form? Is there none on earth that might serve me for model? I never stir abroad, but I see the faces of all who pass me. A flitting gleam in one or another, now a man's, now a woman's, seems to promise what I want. But as I gaze it is lost, and my fellows count me for crazy. The poor mad painter—that is what they call me. Mad or not, I will present the Christ once more in such a form that the world will go after Him as it has never done before. It is I who will be His apostle. The chief of His apostles. My glory will be linked with His through all eternity."

He would have recognised the embodiment of his visionary Christ amongst a thousand. Must his ideal die within him and never see the light? Amongst those who had offered themselves for models were more than one that might have served for a heathen god, but never one for Christ. Luigi of the crooked mouth was of benignant aspect in profile, but his full face spoke of craft and cruelty. Hugo the fair-haired Dane looked strong enough to cope single-handed with the powers of death and hell, but his expression of pride would have ill fallen in with one's conception of the gentle Saviour. Such an one might break open the prison-gates, but would lack the kindness to set the captives free. There was a lack of spirituality in Antonio's face, while Martello's was spiritual enough but weak. The little ones might nestle in his arms, but women would never look to him for help. The "Bimbo bianco," the name by which a certain well-known model went, had a face of almost cherubic innocence, but childish. It must be a countenance that would make men valiant to look upon, as well as pure and gentle,—one that should not only attract the

good, but arrest the wicked in their course, and win them to thoughts of heaven.

To portray Him in His infancy were in comparison an easy task. In all childhood there is a trace of the Divine. Its past is hid in heaven; its present sinless; its future full of mysterious possibilities. But as full-grown man! the strength, the vigour, the experience of masculine maturity combined with the guilelessness of childhood, the gentleness of woman. Who could obtain to the delineation of Him as such? It would be nothing less than a new manifestation of the Godhead, the Deity made visible once more to human eyes.

Weary with pondering on his one idea, and half maddened with delay, the artist looked with straining, unseeing gaze toward the skies, over whose sunset gold clouds were beginning to gather, and his lips moved in half-unconscious prayer.

"Oh, Christ, if not from regard to Thy glory, then for the sake of mine, show me of Thy beauty! Thou grantest desires less righteous, desires for pleasure, for gold. Have not I passed by the fairest faces, intent on Thine image only? Have I not despised worldly gain and consecrated my gift to Thee? Why should my longing alone be for ever baffled? See, Lord! I will give Thee till to-morrow night. If Thou deny me my soul's desire, if Thou still disdainest the help of my art, henceforth I will devote my talent to earthly things. Beautiful women, lovely children, will offer me their living faces to model from. I shall need no hidden labour of prayer, no special gift of grace. Henceforward my soul shall worship apart—if she needs must worship. Farewell the mystic dream! No Christ shall any longer hinder my art. The beauty and love of earth shall yet establish in me their claims to divinity."

* * * * *

"Signore, there is a man at the door says he is a model and would like to speak with you. Will you see him?" It was his old landlord who spoke.

Paolo started like one roused from a dream. "A model? ah, I am tired of them. What sort of a man, Vincenzio?"

"He seems a stranger. Beautiful enough, but——" and the old man shrugged his shoulders.

"Admit him," said the artist.

Daylight was fading, and Paolo could only distinguish a man of majestic mien, with dark curling hair parted in the middle. He stood bareheaded in the shadow of the doorway, and the artist felt rather than saw his eyes fixed on him.

"Pardon, Signore," he began, in a voice whose silvery accents thrilled with an odd impression of familiarity on the artist's ear. "I am a stranger in Florence, but I have heard of the Signore's difficulty in obtaining a model for his work. Men have said"—he paused, and looked down with a deprecating air which sat strangely on him—"they have said I had a look of Christ."

He advanced a step, and the last ray from the setting sun fell full on his features. Heavens, what a face! It was the artist's ideal realised, his dream embodied. But did it satisfy him? His heart beat wildly, and a mist seemed to gather before his eyes. He passed his hand over them and looked again.

The stranger had drawn near and was gazing on him with the same curiously eager, modest yet confident air. Twilight had made rapid strides toward night, and his intent eyes seemed to have gathered into them all the radiance there was left.

Paolo lit the lamp. In the clear light it shed he beheld a countenance of rarest beauty, a face which, while it departed not entirely from the type generally ascribed to Christ's, was of a keener, more eager character, worn as with long thought and vigil, yet with an unquenchable energy expressed in every lineament.

The artist gazed upon it fascinated. Yes—it was the image on which his fancy had dwelt for years; a face so full of power that, were it transferred to canvas, its painter's fame would go with it down the ages. And yet what look was it that flitted across it, and was gone ere Paolo had divined its meaning? Ah, but now that he had found the form, could he not infuse what spirit into it he pleased? He had not brooded all these years on the divine image for nothing.

"You have come from far?" he said at last, breaking with difficulty on the silence which had fallen. "You are weary—and it seems to me that you have suffered."

"Ah, Signore, I have had many sufferings!" said the stranger.

"They will make you the fitter to sit for the Man of Sorrows," returned the artist. "Yes, yes, I see my soul's desire within my grasp! You are the very model I have been seeking. Whence come you, and by what name do you go?"

"They call me Serafino. I am but newly come to Florence. Trade has been poor in my home beyond the hills, and I came to this artist's-nest to see if my face might not earn me something. Excuse me, Signore, if the thought was vain. 'Twas not mine own. I was chosen once to play the part of Jesus in a Passion Play. And travelling over the mountains but now, I met a priest who crossed himself when he saw me, blessed me for my look of Christ, and wished me the peace of heaven."

A spasm crossed his face as he uttered the word *peace*, bringing to it such a troubled, yet scornful look as a ghost might wear in presence of living men who cannot divine of his state.

"Tell me, my friend," said Paolo, "how old are you? Your face is young, but the shadows of many years seem to lie on it. The courage of youth is there, yet one might think you had experienced every pang of which flesh—or else spirit—is capable."

"I am the age of Christ when He had finished His work on earth, and was led forth amid the mockery of foes, and the desertion of His friends, to death. Ah, poverino! He thought to save the world."

II.

The model was gone. Paolo stood by the open window. The city wore a visionary aspect in the early night. Giotto's lily tower and the heavy dome stood out equally dark from amid the gathered roofs and towers. Overhead a silvery young moon guided her light skiff between banks of purple-black and grey-white clouds through a stream of delicate blue. Suddenly it was swallowed up, and the clouds gathered again. The little blue still left in the sky turned to pale lilac, and was then obscured.

The sound of a bell from some distant campanile came borne over the Arno. There was something inexpressibly appealing in its tone. It seemed to mourn the departed day. It called to him as with a thousand memories, and stirred a mighty longing in his heart.

That night strange dreams troubled the artist's sleep. He thought to paint the Christ upon His Cross. Once and again the picture grew under his hands with the rapidity of dream-work. It seemed at the same time as if he were assisting at the actual scene of the Crucifixion. The Cross was raised. The Saviour hung upon it in His death-agony. Then darkness fell. Through the murky air broke a flash of lightning, and illuminated the sufferer's features. "So, it is Judas—it is Judas!" cried the crowd. "Look at the smile on his face!" And from far, mingling with the crash of thunder, came a cry that seemed to rend the heavens.

He woke trembling and bathed in sweat. The mists gradually cleared from his brain. But still for a while he was haunted by that spectre of the false apostle hanging on the tree.

"Is it a sin," he pondered, "that I should seek, as others have done, to depict the form of the Son of Man? Is the blood that was shed for us too sacred that it should be painted starting forth to the pressure of the thorn-crown? Is it too much that a mortal should seek to portray His tears—the pallor of His cheek? The sun grew dark to hide His dying pain from men; but first Pilate had led Him forth before the people. Mine will be an Ecce Homo from which none will be able to turn away unheeding."

Dawn was breaking, and he lay awake till the tumult in his soul subsided. Then he rose and looked out again upon the beautiful city, lying bathed in its morning glory. The artist had recovered his hopes and his ambitions. The vision dispelled his last misgiving.

"This city," he mused, with a more confident courage than had ever animated him before, "the city of Michael Angelo, of Giotto, of Frà Angelico, shall yet be proud that I have lived and laboured in her midst. It will not be in vain that I have spent my golden years dreaming, dreaming over the face of Christ. The world shall yet know of my dreams. The work of my hands shall redeem those wasted years. All nations to come will bless my art."

He paused as the recollection of the stranger's face crossed his mind.

"But will the world love Him more for that Image of Him which my hands shall have wrought? Day and night, night and day, how it has haunted me, filling my whole heart as the image of their beloved fills the thoughts of other men. At last—at last I am to give it shape!"

Serafino was punctual to his appointment, and the artist set to work with feverish energy. An unusual experience awaited him. He was of those who work with difficulty. For every stroke fit to stand he was obliged to erase a score. But now, some unseen power seemed to guide his hand. He had anticipated trouble with his model. Those rarely-fashioned features held such varying and subtle expression, he had thought it would be hard to catch. But the face grew swiftly under his hand.

"Thank God!" he fervently exclaimed, "I have caught the very form."

The model smiled.

"You smile that I should thank God for this?" said the artist. "Nay, thank the Devil then!" A strange reckless mood had come over him.

"O sir, blaspheme not!" said the model. "Indeed, I am not used to hear profane words. And in truth you need thank no one. You, after your long course of labour and study, can obtain your desires without help from any one."

"My desires! what are they?" exclaimed Paolo. "The approving smile of Heaven, the praise of man—whatever is worth the having here and hereafter."

"The Signore will be famous yet!" cried Serafino. "The hope that mocked you will be realized. The vision that has so long haunted your dreams will be set for the world to gaze at."

"How came you to divine my thoughts?" asked Paolo. "Can those passionless eyes of yours see through me? 'Tis more than I can do with you. I am skilled to read the secrets of the human eye, but there is that in yours which baffles me. It slumbers now," he went on, speaking half to himself, "but terrible it would be for the expression of wrath or pain."

"Signore," the model interrupted him, "I will spare no trouble on my part to make your work a success. Pardon, but it seems to me your man of sorrows is like to look too placid. See now, I will put on a look of pain that will wring the heart of whosoever looks on it. My features shall writhe in the despair of death."

"Padre mio!" cried the artist, shading his eyes with his hand. "My friend, you should have been an actor, not a model. The centuries have rolled back all their days. I see Christ before me in His hour of humiliation and pain. How came to you that dreadful gaze? It almost seems the blood-drops have started to your brow."

He drew rapidly, holding his breath, while the model kept his strangely realistic look unmoved.

After a time Paolo, with a deep sigh, threw down his brush. "It is enough," he said; "I have done what might have taken me a month in a less inspired mood."

Serafino went over to where the artist stood, and critically regarded his work. "It is perfect!" he said with a soft laugh.

Paolo glanced quickly at him. The look of pain still lingered on his features, as if it belonged there.

III.

At the second sitting the work went on even more swiftly. The look of anguish in the pictured Christ grew terrible. The artist's hand trembled as he put in the touches which yet cost him scarce an effort. His heart began to misgive him, but he would not pause.

"Bravely! bravely!" he cried to his model. "One would think you had been there when the Christ was mocked and tortured—that you were one of the crowd who waited on His sufferings—one of the disciples who forsook Him—perhaps Peter who denied——"

"Or else Judas who betrayed Him," put in the model again, with that soft laugh which grated on the artist's ears. "Pardon, Signore, I can never refrain from a jest, however untimely," and he composed his features. Their expression was the same as on the previous day, yet somehow a different look had begun to creep into the pictured face; a shade of gloom and wrath was mingling with its anguish.

Paolo stood absorbed before his work after his model had left. In much it fulfilled his dream. There was something great, something superhuman in it. The majesty of form; the look that seemed to tell of high pretensions put to open scorn, of the heart whose secret none might share; the prophecy of coming woe; the tale of glory past, of strange communion with far-off things—all these were there. But something within him cried out against it. "'Tis not the face of Him who was wont to bless my dreams, of Him who stilled the troubled waters into peaceful blue, who chided His disciples' fears, who took the little children in His arms——"

"Santa Maria! What is the Signore painting? Is it the Christ?—for the crown of thorns is on His brow. It makes me shudder!"

It was Teresina, his landlord's young wife, who spoke. A pretty girlish creature, of that fair beauty sometimes to be met with in Tuscany, and with the freedom of speech and manner of a spoilt child. Vincenzio, an ugly, shaggy-looking old man with gleaming, coal-black eyes and ill-formed features, was maniacally jealous of his lovely prize, and kept her as much as possible out of sight. But the artist was looked on, by him as well as by others, as one apart, and Teresina

was allowed to wait on him. She had now entered the studio with his coffee.

Paolo was accustomed to her outspoken criticisms. "Why, what is there amiss with it?" he asked, with unusual sharpness.

"Oh, it's beautiful," returned the girl. "But it is not *Gesù!*" and she gave a flippant little laugh.

Following, as it seemed to him, the gaze of the pictured Christ, Paolo looked at the girl. Her fair young loveliness struck him as if he had never set eyes on it before, and his casual glance changed into an expression of such open admiration, that Teresina's mirthful eyes drooped beneath it, and the colour deepened in her cheek.

At that moment Vincenzio looked in. He was accustomed to seeing his wife in the studio, and knew her beauty to be no more to the artist than the beauty of a picture. But now he caught that look of more than personal interest. The old man scowled and roughly beckoned Teresina away.

IV.

Paolo had in a manner attained his wish. His long-dreamed-of picture was assuming form. In its new aspect it had taken such complete possession of his soul, he had almost forgotten the look his ideal Christ had worn. Less and less meanwhile did his heart dwell on the divine Image. Wild exultation alternated in his breast with fits of gloomy distrust.

One day when this latter mood was on him his friend Pieri entered the studio. A successful practical worker in the everyday walks of art, he had long deplored Paolo's talents wasted, as he deemed them, on an idle dream. Yet it was to his consistent encouragement Paolo owed it that his courage had not drooped. Pieri approached the easel.

"Per Bacco, is that your Christ?" he exclaimed, with an involuntary start of horror, as his eyes fell on the canvas.

Paolo looked at him angrily. "Has it not the good fortune to please you?" he asked, with ill-concealed scorn.

"Nay, it is wonderful!" returned the other, laying his hand kindly on the artist's shoulder. "I have seen nothing like it—though there is something half-familiar in it too. But forgive me, Paolo! It is not a picture I should like to be alone with in the dark. What life is in it!"

"It is not finished," interrupted Paolo hastily.

"But one can see to what it is growing! He looks like one who has no fellowship with any man—not like Him who loved the world and died to save it."

Suddenly, and as it seemed unaccountably, Paolo lost control over himself. The word of criticism had acted as a spark on gunpowder. He flung Pieri's hand from off his shoulder. "You are jealous," he

cried, in a voice that shook with fury. "You envy me my certain fame, the accomplishment of my life-long dream, you—you—whose ambition never rises above sordid gain."

Pieri looked at him amazed. "You know not what you say. You are not yourself!"

"Hypocrite!" cried Paolo, "you would divert me from my prize when it is just within my grasp—you would seek to frighten me from the fulfilment of my glorious task. But no! not the Devil himself shall do that! The world shall ring with my name——"

"It may, for aught I care," returned the other, roused at last.

"Go! go!" said Paolo. "I would wish never to see your face again."

Paolo was conscious of no sense of remorse as his friend slowly quitted the room, as if half expecting to be called back by a relenting word. He stood engrossed before his work.

"What is it that offends in the picture?" he mused. "Where lies the flaw?"

Its look of anguish reproached him. "Am not I thy dream fulfilled?" it seemed to say. "Is it not through me that fame shall come to thee?—that thou wilt take thy place amongst the immortal sons of art? Now mayest thou take thy pleasure in the world. Thy life's work is accomplished."

V.

Teresina had not been in the studio since the day her husband had caught the look the artist had fastened on her, and Paolo, for all his pre-occupation with the picture, pondered unaccountably over her image. Meeting her by chance one evening on the stairs, he was seized with a sudden uncontrollable impulse. Her bright fair beauty fired his blood. He threw his arm around her and kissed her cheek.

"O Signore!" cried the girl, more frightened and surprised than angry; "you who are painting the Lord Jesus, whose thoughts should be all in Paradise!"

"Thou art my Paradise!" returned the painter with a wild gesture.

She darted a terrified glance below. Her quick ear had apparently caught a sound which escaped the artist; and breaking from him, she hurried away.

But old Vincenzio guessed nothing of that meeting, nor yet of others. The young wife had learned to set his suspicions to sleep.

It was an oppressive, restless evening. The sun was declining, not with the farewell flood of light in which he is wont to steep the city of flowers, but with angry crimson hue. A strange tumult was in Paolo's breast. It seemed as if some evil presence were in the room, taunting him with a sense of blessing missed, of doom incurred. He saw the desire of his life turning, even in its fulfilment, into a curse.

Gradually his conflicting fancies resolved themselves into a coherent

train. A vision unfolded itself before his mind's eye. His picture hung for the world to gaze at. Shifting crowds pressed forward to obtain a sight of it, and the artist's name was passed from one to another with exclamations of wonderment and praise. He could see into the souls of those who looked. No impulse of faith, of love, of penitence, of striving after better things, was stirred in any. The expectant thrill of worship with which some had drawn near gave place, beneath the picture's spell, to a feeling of exultant pride at the genius of the artist. And in this moment of prophetic insight, he could follow the after-effects of his work on those who gazed. A young priest turned from it, his purpose of consecrating himself to God by a life of active service to his fellows changed into a dream of self-aggrandizement. A man who had fallen out with his wife, and was bent on reconciliation, looked into the pictured face, and his extinguished anger rekindled into fierce heat, till he conceived a cruel revenge. A poet whose songs breathed of hope and immortality drew in dark inspiration from the gaze of the agonized Christ, and henceforth gave out nothing but utterances of doubt and despair. A woman who had been battling for herself and her children single-handed against an adverse fate lost courage as she looked at it, and went forth to sink into a life of misery. An honest fanatic was converted through its influence into an impostor, a patriot into a traitor.

Paolo broke off with a violent effort from his troubled reverie. Glancing round uneasily, his eyes fell on a mirror. He caught the gaze of the pictured Christ reflected in it. Merciful heavens! Its look of agony was converted into a leer. While he gazed trembling and transfixed with horror, the impression passed.

"It was my fancy fooled me," thought Paolo.

Just then the model entered.

The artist, scarce yet recovered, scanned his face intently, comparing it with the picture. Surely it had undergone some transformation since the night of his first visit. Had there not then been something angelic, something divine, in its look of patient suffering?

"Surely—surely," he broke forth, in a sort of desperation to find his work approaching completion and failing so strangely of his original conception, "you did not look like that," and he nearly flung the back of his hand against the picture; "you did not look so when you offered yourself as model."

Serafino smiled deprecatingly. "Ah, Signore! a man cannot always command his countenance. My face was fixed to the look of pain—but my heart follows its own thoughts."

"Your own thoughts?" impatiently exclaimed the artist. "What are they? Cannot you fix your thoughts on that?" He pointed to a wooden crucifix in the corner.

"There are darker crosses than Christ's," said the model. "I too have hung on one. I have drained a bitterer cup than His—drained it?" he gave a mocking laugh. "There is no draining it! It is

always full to the brim. He has borne all He had to bear. Pain and death have finished with Him. Will they ever have finished with me!"

"You speak presumptuously," said the artist sternly. "His pain and death were for others. He endures them again whenever the road to heaven, marked by His blood, is missed by poor blind men."

Serafino drew near, and intently regarded the picture. It took a shadow from his form. "Yes, yes," he said, "the shadow of unforgotten wrong will rest on His face through all ages to come. Not all the worship and gratitude of men, for whom He gave His life; not all the love of angel hosts, will ever avail to atone for it. The light and song of heaven will never efface that hour of shame and darkness which blots Eternity for Him. He is alone the man of sorrows still! God himself has no power to erase that memory, to reverse His pain, to gladden Him once more with His glory."

"You seem to triumph in the thought of his grief," said the artist.

"I?—nay!" replied Serafino. "I only desire that all may profit by His example. That those who are at ease, lifted high above the ills and troubles of striving, poverty-stricken humanity, may remember Christ, and how He parted from His joy, His life, His glory——"

"Amen! Amen!" put in the artist fervently.

A dark frown crossed the model's face. "I had not finished," he said. "I would have added—and may all who look on it be filled with a sense of the vanity of sacrifice. May they be wakened from their dreams of eternal compensation to the pursuit of what the present has to offer, lest in leaving the substance for the shadow they lose both."

The artist stared at him appalled. "You put a curse upon my work," he said. "You yourself have been a curse! Coming in the semblance of the form I craved, you have robbed me of my ideal—of the image of Christ, pure and perfect, that dwelt within me." His passion blazed up as he spoke. "How could I think to paint the Christ while my heart was playing the traitor to Him——"

"You are over-scrupulous!" interrupted Serafino coolly. "Are those always of the holiest character who preach the most powerful sermons? Have not artists of coarse worldly nature, even of known evil lives, infused the very spirit of purity and tenderness into their saints, their madonnas, their very Christs? Your Christ may be other than you intended,—but was not your talent God-given? Florence may well lament her lack of masters when her painters have no longer the courage of their genius. Will your work less move men to adoration because it has won you fame?"

"Till I began upon it," broke in Paolo, "my life was in keeping with my dreams"—he stopped, choked with grief and passion.

"Chè, chè!" sneered the model. "You make a great deal of a little thing. One would think you had committed a crime."

The artist flashed a glance at Serafino. A smile hovered about the model's mouth, but his inscrutable eyes gave no sign.

"Deliberately to lower one's standard of right is the greatest crime of all," said Paolo bitterly.

VI.

That night, starting suddenly, whether from sleep or from some waking reverie he could not have told, Paolo heard sounds of altercation in the chamber overhead,—the voice of Vincenzio, fierce and threatening, the passionate crying accents of the young wife. The next moment there was a heavy fall on the pavement below. It sent a thrill to his heart such as the fall of no inanimate body could have caused. He sprang to the window and threw it wide. A wind blew straight on his face; a chill, unfriendly wind.

The city was steeped in brilliant moonlight which gave the effect as of a spectral day. A crowd had collected beneath his window, gathered tumultuously around a dark object that lay prone on the ground. Paolo could distinguish figures. There bent old Vincenzio, his grizzled locks blown by the wind, over a huddled form lying with white face upturned to the sky, with wild gesticulations appealing now to one or another amid the crowd, now to the fallen figure on the pavement, now to the moonlit heavens.

A dark form crossed the street. The artist recognised his model. Serafino drew near so quietly that no one seemed to perceive him. He turned with cold, dispassionate looks from one to another. Once he trod on the fallen woman's hair. Then, glancing upwards, his eyes met Paolo's, who returned his gaze as if fascinated. The model's eyes gleamed bright in the moonlight with the peculiar deadly, mocking smile he knew so well. "This is *our* work!" they seemed to say.

Sick with horror, Paolo drew back from the window. The moonlight streamed into his room. It fell upon the pictured Christ.

The next moment Serafino stood before him. The look of malignant triumph on his face goaded the artist to frenzy. Without a thought but of gratifying the rage that possessed him, he turned on the beautiful mocking being, who had suddenly assumed for him the aspect of a deadly foe, and struck him in the face. His arm was nerveless, or Serafino was panoplied in invisible armour, for the blow fell harmless. He struck again and again, but always with the same effect.

A cold fear crept over the artist. A sense of deadly peril overcame him, of having been beguiled and tricked to his own eternal undoing. He fought as if for his life, if that could be called fighting in which the opponent offered no resistance. The model stood mute and motionless, still with that cold, mocking smile upon his face. Once and again Paolo's courage well-nigh failed him. His strength was as

nothing in the contest. "By the blood of Christ," he cried, at last in a transport, "begone!"

A darkness fell, through which gleamed a blinding flash—and Paolo awoke. All that had passed had been a troubled dream.

A flood of distorted terrified reflection swept over him. Wild, half-forgotten legends thronged unbidden to his mind. Spirits seemed to be calling to him from every side. As in a flash of moral lightning, his own dreams of self-glory were revealed to him. He saw his mad ambition, his presumptuous folly in their true colours. What terrible temptation was it to which he had yielded! "My God!" he cried in affrighted reverence, "and it was in such a spirit I thought to paint the Christ."

In a shadowed corner of the room stood a common wooden crucifix. The figure that hung so patiently upon it, the homely peasant figure with its look of kindly suffering that yet had in it something divine, seemed to draw him as with a promise to help and comfort. He fell prostrate before it, his face buried in his hands.

"O Christ! the meanest representation of Thy form, the lowest outrage on art, yet wrought with a single heart, hath in it something of Thee. While mine, the outcome of years of thought and vigil, of anxious weary labour, is nothing but a betrayal—but a slander on Thy sacred Image!"

In an agony of self-abasement he leaned his brow against the base of the Cross. There was something in its touch that brought peace and healing to his soul. The fevered dreams which had so long haunted him, quitted their possession of his heart, like a flock of dark-winged birds. Time and space had ceased for him. He was alone with God.

Hour after hour passed. The moonlight faded. There was a brief spell of darkness. Then the dim blue dawn stole once more over the city.

Paolo raised his head and looked about him bewildered. He was on his knees before the crucifix. He stole a trembling, half-eager, half-reluctant glance at his easel. What miracle was this? The canvas was bare. No strange and yet familiar, wild, mocking face looked forth on him in agony. In the early morning stillness he heard the voice of Teresina singing at her work.

In a strange rapture that yet was not the ordinary rapture of the artist, Paolo seized his brush. Through streaming tears that seemed to wash his vision clear, he traced an outline. The drops from his eyes splashed down upon the palette. He mixed his paints with tears.

A face gradually grew upon the canvas. He himself was awed by the divinity that stole into it. But neither was this the Christ of his dreams. No expressed blessing was in His look. Neither earth nor heaven was in view of those rapt eyes. And yet a promise of light and immortality glimmered from beneath the half-closed lids. A wondrous peace emanated from the worn features.

It was the Saviour absorbed in His own dream of salvation, shut out from the world, shut out even from His Father's smile.

The face seemed to float in light before the artist. He painted as from a living copy. And yet the picture was veiled as by some mysterious shadow. It bore a strange indefiniteness of form and feature.

"The work is not mine," he thought; "I am not worthy even to be the instrument."

* * * * *

Two men were standing before a picture of Christ in one of the Academies of Florence. It was a mere sketch, but more instinct with life than if it had been of finished execution. It seemed as if the painter had had a glimpse of the real face of Christ, His loving, sensitive face, stamped with the secrets of eternity. A face of such unforced expression that you wondered wherein its strength lay; and as you gazed its secrets grew upon you. For all its look of love and pity, the most striking attribute of the picture was its expression of almost terrible power. It was the countenance of one against whom nothing could stand.

The two men gazed upon the picture with something of awe. One of them, a dark, keen-eyed, kindly-looking man, was unmistakably an artist; the other a visitor in Florence.

"And this was his last work?" said the stranger.

"Yes," returned the artist. "It had been the dream of his life to accomplish such a picture, and have his name go down to posterity linked with the fame of it. I knew him well. A visionary, yet full of personal ambition. The idea wrought upon him till he had worn himself almost into a fever with it, as well as with prayer and fasting."

"And he did not live to elaborate the work?"

"When the inspiration came to him," said the artist, "which was very suddenly at the last, he threw his whole remaining strength into the carrying of it out. With the last strokes his life ebbed from him. I saw him just before the end, a wasted enthusiast on his knees before his work. And he might have done such great things!"

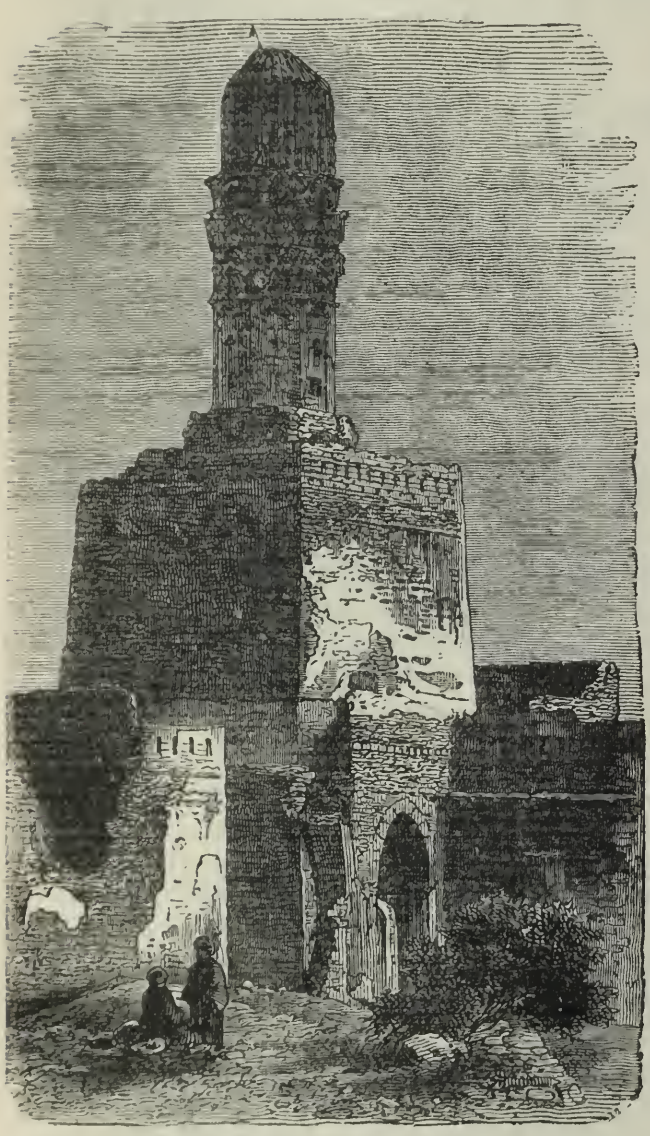
"You have not told me his name," said the stranger.

"Nay, that I cannot; it was his last expressed wish that his name should never be mentioned in connection with the picture. It was, he said, his atonement for the long dream of self-glory he had cherished, the only sacrifice he could offer in return for the favour that had been vouchsafed him."

PAULINE W. ROOSE.

THE MOSQUE OF HASSAN.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Letters from Majorca," etc., etc.



The Mosque of El Hakim.

THE moments passed insensibly. The world was sleeping; our time was our own. From the top of the minaret we gazed upon this wonderful City of the Dead lying under the moonbeams. Imagination was stimulated to the highest degree by the darkness, by the weird cold moonlight and its ghostly shadows, by the silence that enveloped the world like a funeral mantle, by thoughts and emotions that chased each other through heart and brain. The moon travelled onwards, and constellations rose and set, before we attempted to take our last look at the Tombs of the Caliphs.

"Yet one more experience," said Osman. "I have now made you acquainted with one of the marvellous scenes of earth. We have gazed upon this dead world in the very dead of night, when the busy world about us might be dead also, for all evidence to the contrary. Let us go forward whilst the moon is yet high enough to give her light and cast her shadows. Having looked down upon a dead world, we will now enter a dead world and look upwards; the dead about us will be more limited in number, but the silence will be as solemn, and the solitude as perfect."

We turned and began to descend the narrow staircase. As we neared the end, again the faint glimmer of light appeared, guiding our footsteps, casting the ghostly custodian into deeper shadow. He made no sound and seemed to make no movement, yet the door opened as mysteriously and noiselessly as before, and we passed out. With a deep reverence, with no word spoken, he closed the door, which seemed to fasten of its own accord, with his lantern he threw unsteady rays on road and wall and ruined mosque, and finally disappeared down a narrow aperture, which led to the small colony existing on the outskirts of the tombs. We listened for the faintest echo of a footstep, but heard none.

"Are you exercising more magic than you promised us?" we asked of Osman. "Like the Witch of Endor, have you summoned a spirit from the dead, and has a ghost waited upon us in this ghostly place?"

"It might well be," laughed Osman. "Time and place and opportunity are all favourable to the event. But I have not the power of magic. Ghosts come not at my summons any more than they did for the Witch of Endor. You may be sure that was the first and the last she ever raised, and it came not at her bidding, but at the command of a Higher Power and to punish her. After that unexpected experience, depend upon it she never meddled again with the supernatural. Our late attendant was no ghost. This is not my first visit by many to the moonlit Tombs of the Caliphs, nor his first attendance upon me. He knows I never allow the charm to be broken by word or sound, and to-night, as I was not alone, he realised that he had to be more silent than ever. It is wonderful how noiselessly most of them can walk; the power of motion without sound. A ghost would not move more quietly."

We were passing away from the Tombs, leaving them to their solemn stillness and repose. Our footsteps alone faintly roused the echoes; nothing but our hushed voices disturbed the air. The brilliant moonbeams threw lights and shadows deep as those of day upon road and ruin. The minarets and cupolas of the solemn tombs stood out in this ghostly pallor with almost every detail visible. Thrilling indeed would it have been to have now heard the voice of the Muezzin ringing out over the sleeping world his summons to the faithful: "Prayer is better than sleep! Allah! Allah! Allah! There is no God but God!"

But the hour of dawn was still very far off.

It was almost pain to find ourselves beyond the boundaries of this solemn and mysterious, this matchless region. We were leaving behind us what we probably should never see again; certainly never under the same conditions, or with Osman for our guide, companion, and friend. And even if the fates so willed that on some future and unknown occasion the exact circumstance would be repeated, there would still be a mighty difference.

In spite of Osman's assurance, the supreme incidents of life which have on rare occasions fallen a second time to our lot, have never been the same. They never are for any one. Imagination having raised the first to a paradise not of earth, nothing of earth can again approach it. Such moments—not to speak of things mental and psychological—have been those when we first gazed upon the Alhambra by moonlight; first sat amongst the ruins of Pompeii, and the tragedy of that first century passed before us in all its terrible reality, whilst our eyes rested upon the author of all the woe: burning, smoking Vesuvius: a little stream of molten lava trickling down its side, ashes and smoke shooting upwards, as if the artillery of some demon foe were bidding defiance to Heaven itself; the deep blue sea in the Bay of Naples calm as a river, beautiful as a dream; the far-reaching coast, the distant Island of Capri, rising like a vision out of a golden haze; the sun in its meridian; the blue of the azure—true azure—undimmed by a cloud.

Such a moment was this, when we gazed for the first time upon the Tombs of the Caliphs by moonlight, whilst Osman poured out the magic of romantic eloquence in those subdued tones of his which were music in themselves. Some of these experiences have fallen to our lot a second or a third time, and we have said: "Now for a supreme moment: now for thoughts and emotions which will raise one to Paradise." But they have not come at our bidding: nothing ever does. The second experience has been cold and disappointing: we have trembled lest our love for the beautiful, our conception of the sublime, should be loosening. But it is only imagination that has worked the mischief: the third experience, from which we have expected little, has restored the balance. The first pressure of the grape is the sweetest; it must ever be so; it is so even in that master-passion of which all poets have sung. Our first supreme love is a reality as powerful as it is generally short-lived; and when it dies, "the song has left the bird." Second love may be more lasting, pure, elevating, all this; but it is not the Fool's Paradise in which for a moment we dwelt. Fool's Paradise only because it could not last; real and earnest enough in every other respect.

We passed out of the charmed circle, leaving one of our supreme moments behind us. We stood without the boundaries of the Tombs of the Caliphs. There, in the cold moonlight, stood carriage and servants, immovable as if they formed part of the dead world around. Osman said a few words to them in their unknown tongue; they responded with a silent reverence, and we walked on, leaving them behind us. Afterwards we knew that he had told them to remain where they were for half-an-hour, and then follow leisurely to a given direction.

That moonlight walk through the deserted thoroughfares was one of our pleasantest experiences of Cairo. The vast spaces about us seemed boundless in the comparative obscurity. Distant monuments

At the foot of the Citadel.

stood out with weird effect. A sense of repose was over all. We had the world to ourselves; stars and moon seemed to shine for us alone: moon twice as brilliant, twice as large as the moons of our Western skies.

We had left our City of the Dead, but many others were about us, though less ancient and interesting.

Away to the south-west, surrounded by other tombs over which it seemed to keep watch and ward, was the great tomb of the Imam esh-Shafeeh, who founded, we may remember, one of the four sects of El Islam, and died in the year 820 full of age and honours.

The tomb is said to have been built by the great Saladin. It is large, and the interior has been modernised and not improved. Of its four niches, one of course points the way to Mecca, that religious *Ultima Thule* of the true follower of the Prophet. By day the light enters through coloured windows, which, though not good, cast a subdued and effective gloom upon the interior. At night, when illuminated for some special occasion, it is far more imposing. Porcelain lamps are suspended from the dome. Lamps of coloured glass hang from the canopy overshadowing the tomb of esh-Shafeeh, which is adorned with a covering of rich gold embroidery. At the head lies a turban partly covered by a cashmere shawl, supposed to have been worn by the saint. The centuries have been kind to the garments. A wooden railing inlaid with mother-of-pearl surrounds the tomb; and a marble pillar close at hand is adorned with sculptured inscriptions in red and gold. Ostrich eggs are suspended from the canopy, on which the little lamps throw their rich colours. Above the dome, a vane, in the form of a boat, tells you whence comes the wind, which can be kindly and cruel here, as in less favoured lands: sometimes raising those fierce and fiery sandstorms before which even the Arab of the desert flies for very life. It is then that the fleet foot of the camel does good service to its master, and proves once again how wonderfully the law of adaptation, the eternal fitness of things, governs the world: the ordering and disposing, not the result of chance, but of Divine Wisdom.

We had no sandstorm to-night. Still was the air and cloudless the sky. To our right the Citadel reared its proud head. A sentinel looked down upon us. Here the Mameluke Ameen Bey took his wonderful leap over the breastwork, saved by the bravery of his horse, on that memorable day when Mohammed Ali invited all the Mameluke Beys, numbering nearly five hundred, to a banquet within the Citadel, and then put a terrible end to their rapacious reign by murdering them all in cold blood. Yet they were shielded by the protection which the sacred laws of hospitality most especially enjoin in the East.

It seems almost impossible that this century should contain such a record: but it all happened in the year 1810. The five hundred horsemen, richly caparisoned, presenting a dazzling spectacle in the flashing sunshine, approached the gate of el-Ayab. A signal gun was

fired, the rattling shots of the Albanians, covered by the walls, fell volley after volley, and in less time than it takes to describe, the reign of the Mamelukes was a matter of history, and that of Mohammed Ali was established.

We half shuddered as we thought of it all to-night in treading almost the very ground where the blood of the murdered Mamelukes had run in streams. In imagination we saw again the leap taken by that brave horse, which enabled its master to escape into Spain and there found a new order of Mamelukes: whilst in the Citadel of Cairo Mohammed Ali in the flush of victory and success was proudly echoing the words used long before his day and under more peaceful skies: "*Le roi est mort, vive le roi!*"

As we entered the Place Roumeeleh there issued forth from the other end, with strange and startling effect, one of those processions of Dervishes already described. They had been to worship, in their own peculiar and semi-barbarous way, at the tomb of one of their favourite saints. A weird procession, not more than ten in all, moving with ghostly steps. Two of their lanterns were lighted; the others they had apparently extinguished. Gleams from these lanterns mingled strangely with the lights and shadows thrown by the moon. In the great open square the little group looked almost lost. If they perceived us, they probably wondered why three apparently peaceful citizens, with no visible object in view, were patrolling the deserted, moonlit streets of Cairo in the dead of night. Poetry and romance, the unspeakable repose of Nature under the silent moonbeams, that wonderful City of the Dead, the Tombs of the Caliphs beneath the same witching influence: of all this they knew nothing. Happy beings with limited sensibilities, their spiritual cravings found rest in midnight pilgrimages to saints' tombs, in dismal howlings and frenzied whirlings. The soul's higher aspirations; the pain of unfulfilled desire; the intense longing for perfection—that seeking after holiness never to be quite found on earth by mortal man: these things were a sealed book to them.

They disappeared like silent shadows to the left of the Mosque of Hassan, in front of which at that moment we were standing. The building looked almost sublime in the moonlight, with exaggerated dimensions that seemed immeasurable to man. The dome rose in lofty proportions, large and solemn; the minaret, the highest in Cairo, or in existence, seemed to touch the dark canopy of the skies. The great square itself, bounded by the rock bearing the citadel, had the appearance of a small desert: crowded by day with its picturesque Eastern groups, now silent and deserted as the dead city we had so recently left. Deep lights and shadows were all around us.

Passing to the right of the Mosque, we reached the great porch with its wonderful ornamentations, the high walls above terminating in their magnificent cornice.

Here again we seemed to be expected. A guardian at the head

of the steps made us another silent and solemn reverence, and opened the doorway through which we entered. Again we were in a charmed world. Within we found four or five men in Eastern garb, who proceeded at once to light torches and place themselves under Osman's direction.

"This is a little surprise for you," he said, turning to us, and speaking in those melodious tones that we have said were music. "To-morrow we will come and see this by daylight. I thought I would first show it to you by torchlight and moonlight. It is a matchless building; and though we cannot now discover all its beauties, its wonderful outlines will be thrown up with ghostly effect by the torches, whilst its immense distances will be lost in profound gloom: an almost 'Egyptian darkness.'"

We had entered a vestibule above which rose a well-proportioned cupola with stone arabesques, all thrown into a relief of light and shade by the torch-bearers.

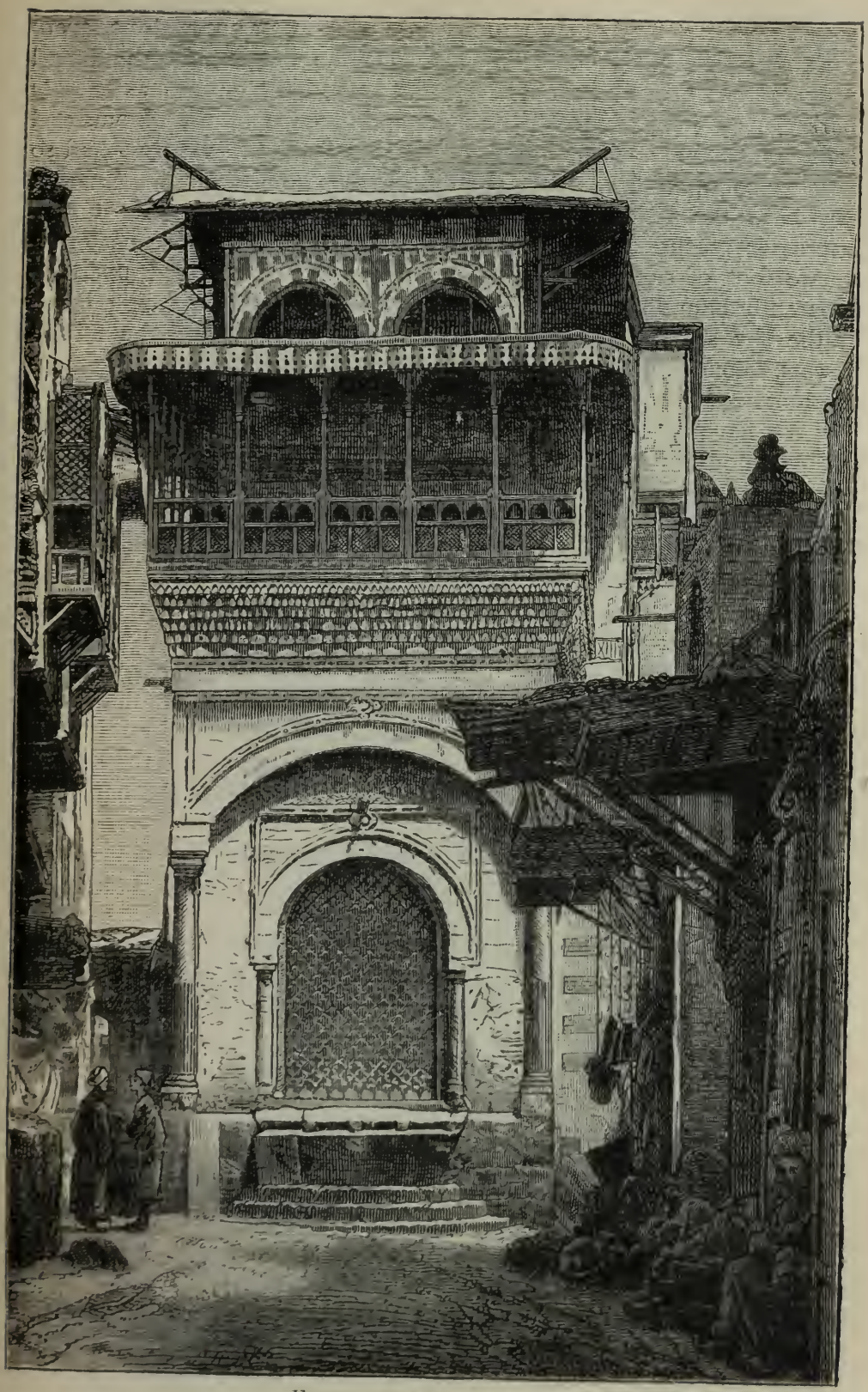
Here Osman bade them wait, whilst we passed alone into the great, square court.

The scene was strangely impressive, full of solemn mystery. In the centre of the court was a large fountain, and near it a smaller: the one used by the Egyptians, the other by the Turks. For in days not so long gone by Turks and Egyptians would have nothing to do with each other; even now there is no true fraternity between them. This court was open to the sky. The dark dome of night was above us, with its flashing stars and constellations. The moon, round as a shield, flooded the court with her light.

On each side there was a square recess covered by a magnificent arch; the building with these recesses forming almost a Greek cross. Thus it is evident that the architect of this wonderful Mosque of Hassan was under European as well as Eastern influence: a combination resulting in the finest building in Cairo, the grandest mosque in existence.

We were surrounded by arcades of pointed horseshoe arches, wonderfully effective, full of beauty and refinement. Where the moonbeams fell the pavement was chequered by strong lights and shadows, tracing the arches in slanting, foreshortened outlines: the space beyond thrown into mysterious darkness. Nothing could have been more coldly, purely beautiful. The silence and repose upon all seemed almost painfully evident: but above all other impression was a sense of harmony. The pavement was of coloured marbles.

As we approached the fountains we saw, even in the moonlight, that they were passing into dilapidation and decay. They are excellent examples of Arabian design. The larger is crowned by a round, Eastern-looking cupola, painted blue, bearing the familiar crescent; whilst the colour of the dome was interrupted by a broad belt bearing an inscription in gold characters. To-night all such details were only faintly perceptible, and much would have been



FOUNTAIN AND SCHOOL.

passed over but for Osman's indication, who knew every stone, every nook and corner by heart. It was not the details but the broad outlines that proved so effective. The wonderful arches as clearly marked as by day, with all the solemn influence of the glooms and darkness beyond: all as impressive in its way as the view we had so long gazed upon from the minaret in the Tombs of the Caliphs. But here the vision was bounded: the mind grasped all it saw, just as it grasps at a glance a wide, far-reaching landscape on a square foot of canvas. From the minaret we had gazed upon an apparently boundless world, for which the great, dark, flashing dome of the sky seemed not too large, not too lofty. Here the mind's powers, concentrated, were sooner satisfied. We did not stay too long.

"We have it our own way to-night," said Osman, "and forms and ceremonies can be dispensed with; but to-morrow, when we come to contrast our daylight with our moonlight impression, we shall have to put on straw shoes before treading this sacred pavement. Above all things I am careful not to offend their prejudices, which have all the strength of a narrow-minded people not allowed to think for themselves. Is not the scene unspeakably fine? Night and the moon have a mysterious influence upon the imagination. Everything is softened and subdued. The intense darkness appeals to our highest and most spiritual instincts. But the night is on the wane: we must not linger. Only, it is so delicious to revel in all these scenes and impressions when the world is sleeping and all the solemn hush and repose braces up the spirit and strengthens the hands for future work."

At a given signal, the torch-bearers entered the court, and immediately flooded it with an artificial glare which mingled strangely with the moonlight.

The effect was more weird, but the calmness and repose no longer existed. Unsteady glimmers, uncertain lights and shadows flitted and fell in all directions. The flames illumined the faces of the men, increasing the darkness beyond, but making them appear almost like demons from a lower world. Nothing could be more majestic than the appearance of the court, with its small arcades, its magnificent arches covering the recesses, and the immensely high walls enclosing all.

We left the court to the repose of the moonlight, the solemn night silence, and passing through the cupola-crowned vestibule found ourselves in a long passage, at the end of which was a semicircular recess.

Here Sultan Hassan is said to have given public audience in the days of his reign. The mosque itself was commenced in the year 757 of the Hegira—1356 of our own era. It took three years to build, at a cost of £600 a day. The walls are over 113 feet high, and in many parts 25 feet deep. According to the legend, Hassan,

when the mosque was completed, ordered the architect's hands to be cut off, in order that he might never build another; as though hands, not brain, had been responsible for the magnificent design. This legend has been handed down in connection with so many ancient buildings, that we may well give the wise and great Hassan the benefit of the doubt, and believe it untrue.

The previous reign, that of his father, Nasr, had existed forty-three years: and Cairo owes much to En-Nasr. He greatly enlarged it, and may almost be said to have left it a city of palaces. He founded many of the wells and many of the schools attached to the wells. The reader will remember that most of these wells have schools attached to them: rooms immediately above the wells, or larger houses in the immediate neighbourhood. Many are for orphans, and their endowment dates to long past ages. As the well of water was to supply the needs of the body, so the well of knowledge administered by the fakirs or schoolmasters should supply the needs of the mind; whilst the Koran, first and foremost in all instruction, should awaken and strengthen all the instincts of the soul. This ministering to the spiritual as well as the temporal wants of mankind was an act worthy of enlightened times; an excellent paraphrase, also, upon our Saviour's simile, who likened Himself to a well of water, of whom whosoever drank should never thirst.

En-Nasr founded many of these wells. His reign was a long one, and he was able to accomplish much. He seems to have borne a charmed life, for his enemies never succeeded in doing anything but occasionally deposing him. He ascended the throne when only nine years old, an age when he was completely in the hands of his unscrupulous Ameers: but, in the end, he conquered and established his rule.

Like most of his dynasty, he was a mixture of good and evil; capable of great achievements, and of great meanness and petty tyranny. He was extravagant in all his ideas, and to supply the calls on his exchequer would stoop to any injustice, even to breaking an oath. A long season of wise ruling, of brave deeds, would be followed by an outbreak of licentiousness and folly carried out with all his strength of purpose and earnestness of mind. As a conqueror he was great: extending his dominions from Abyssinia to Asia Minor, from Tunis to Bagdad.

His greatest achievement in arms was beating the Mongols in the plain of Merg as-Soffar, cutting to pieces their army of 100,000 men. When he returned from this victory, the people of Cairo made a great festival in his honour. Immense artificial basins were filled with lemonade for the use of the army; whilst for those in command rich banquets were prepared, at which wine flowed as water. The lavishness and waste were unbounded, and licentiousness ran riot. Not long after, an earthquake laid low a portion of Cairo, and many thousands of those who had been first and foremost in the festivals and

carousals lost their lives: the judgment of Heaven, said they who had looked on in condemnation.

En-Nasr himself escaped all these troubles. He made himself popular with the people by granting them many indulgences, and they were ready to obey even his unreasonable requests. The Christians, however, had a hard time of it. Willing to conciliate them in the beginning, and to be kind to them, they managed to offend him, and so ruined their cause. The Christians were made to wear blue turbans, the Jews yellow, to distinguish them from the Moslems. The women wore a mark upon the breast. The men were not allowed to ride on horseback, which was considered too great an honour; and were only permitted to sit sideways on donkeys. They were deprived of all privileges, and were not allowed to hold any post of trust or authority. Tyranny ensued. The lower orders of Mohammedans ill-treated them, plundered their churches and synagogues, rendered their lives unbearable; until at last the Christians of other countries rose up to their rescue.

It was in the latter part of his reign that En-Nasr enlarged and beautified Cairo, quite regardless of expenditure and extravagance. He had not to pay the lower classes any wages, but merely to feed them, and yet he spent nearly £5,000 a day in planning and building. His palaces were large and splendid, and his Ameers, following his example, made themselves magnificent palaces also. He constructed canals, and turned the desert wastes into "fruitful wildernesses."

Many of the mosques date from his time. He was a great lover of horses, and is said to have once paid half a million for a horse on which he had set his fancy, rather than not possess it. He was at once full of strength and weakness. Though small and lame, he was of untiring energy and activity, and was devoted to the chase and to falconry. He encouraged learning, and was himself a man of considerable attainments. Yet he made few friends. No sooner was he dead than all his property was instantly seized; not even a pall, it is said, was found to cover his coffin. His funeral took place at night, under cover of the darkness, attended by only a few faithful emirs, a single lantern guiding their steps. A strange procession for a monarch, recalling some of the anecdotes of William of Normandy. Nasr left twelve sons behind him, not one of whom seems to have had the good feeling to follow his father to the grave. Six of them succeeded him one after the other in the space of five years; then Hassan ascended the throne, and after reigning fifteen years was assassinated. It was during his reign that the "Black Death" visited the country with especial ravages, and in one day nearly 20,000 people are said to have died in Cairo.

Amongst other good things that he did was the building of this wonderful mosque, from which for a moment we have wandered.

This mosque has always been a sort of "City of Refuge." Leaders of rebellions have here met in secret and formed their plans. Here

DISTRIBUTING DATES IN CEMETERY OF CAIRO.

the Arabs took shelter during the insurrection in Cairo on the 21st October, 1799. In the walls are still shown some of the cannon balls lodged there by Napoleon when he invaded Egypt. So that the old mosque has not been exclusively given over to worship and religious ordinances.

But to-night, as far as we could see and feel, it might for ever have been the abode of peace and harmony, a temple never desecrated by scenes of riot and bloodshed. The sombre passage with its stone benches down which we passed, was full of weird lights and shadows cast by the torch-bearers. We were a quiet, strange-looking procession and might have been bent on some subterraneous, supernatural task.

To the south-east of the building we entered the sanctuary, the largest of the four square recesses opening to the central court. This was the Holy of Holies. Here at the end was the Mihrab or prayer-niche, where the faithful may pray with their faces turned towards Mecca.

The walls are of many-coloured marbles, and there are four slender columns, ornamented with marble and porphyry decorations of somewhat debased style. Near these was the pulpit. The reading-desk was supported by three pilasters and eight small columns, roughly executed but effective in design. Over all our torch-bearers threw a weird light. Nothing was wanting but a crowd of kneeling worshippers to perfect the scene. Above, a large bronze candelabrum was hung, of remarkable workmanship. Two rows of vases in coloured glass were suspended from the walls, with the name of Hassan inscribed upon each. Above them was a frieze ornamented with light arabesques, upon which, encircling the whole sanctuary, was a prominent inscription in Cufic characters.

The whole decoration, so far as could be seen in this uncertain light, was gorgeous and splendid. Small lamps of curious workmanship and design were suspended from the great cross-beams. The sanctuary was especially designed for Sultan Hassan himself. Here he would retire for solitary prayer; and from the pulpit he would occasionally preach to an assembled crowd, or give forth public instructions. The people were not admitted within the sanctuary, but stood in the large open space without.

Hassan, like some of his predecessors, had not enjoyed an uninterrupted reign. More than once he was deposed by his jealous and ambitious Ameers; and during these periods of deposition he had studied theology. In preaching to the people, therefore, he was not without some knowledge of his subject. This speaks well for the earnest nature of his mind in the days of his youth, for he was only twenty-four when he was assassinated by his treacherous High Marshal.

There was probably a want of tact about Hassan, an inability to govern men by taking them in the right way: a defect time would have remedied in one who was really wise and earnest of purpose. His Ameers were too strong for him. The wretched Mameluke spirit

of pride and ambition and love of power was stronger than they, and nothing was allowed to stand in the way of their advancement. The immediate cause of revolt was that Hassan, who perhaps could judge men better than he could rule them, had placed about himself Egyptian and Arab officials to the exclusion of the Mameluke chiefs. This was too much for their vanity, and their vexed spirit rose in rebellion.

Hassan ought to have anticipated danger and treachery. It may be that he did so, but considered his Egyptians and Arabs sufficiently powerful to protect him: forgetting the strength and danger of an unseen foe, which, like a lie that is half a truth, is always the hardest to fight. The Mamelukes suddenly rose in revolt with irresistible force. Unprepared, Hassan fled from his enemies, was caught by his High Marshal Yelboghas, and basely murdered.

This was in the year 1361, and in 1382 the Baharite Mameluke Dynasty came to an end: to be succeeded by the Circassian Mameluke Dynasty, which in its turn in 1517 gave place to a Turkish Pashalic.

The Tomb Chamber of the Mosque of Hassan had been designed by him to be the resting-place of his body after death. It is a large, bare, deserted building, which impresses by its proportions. As we saw it to-night, in the uncertain light cast by the torches, it looked limitless. The great cupola above, rising to a height of 180 feet, was lost in the shadows. Even in the gloom we could see the ruin and decay that was going on.

The transition from the circular dome to the quadrangular walls is cunningly effected by brackets of the usual and very artistic honeycomb and stalactite design which marks a sort of transitional period between the flamboyant and the perpendicular. The sepulchre is in the centre of the chamber and bears the date of the Hegira 764, two years after the death of the Sultan. But the body does not repose here; it was never recovered after death, and what became of it was never known.

The Cairenes ignore this, and the Tomb Chamber is one of their favourite spots for offering up their prayers.

It is no less a public rendezvous for secular purposes. Here they meet in numbers and discuss business and the affairs of the day. In the extreme heat of summer its coolness and shade are grateful even to the fire-worshipping Egyptians. In the very face of this crowd, the ruin and destruction of the beautiful building are allowed to go on unchecked. The pendentives, worm-eaten, time-touched, are falling into fragments; the windows have lost their ironwork. The tomb is oblong in form, simple in design, and is turned towards Mecca. It is surrounded by an iron railing. On the tomb reposes a copy of the Koran, written by Hassan himself in large, fine characters. At the end of the chamber is a richly-ornamented Mihrab or prayer-niche.

The great mausoleum chamber looked solemn and sombre in the weird light in which we saw it. It seemed indeed a gloomy and fitting spot for the repose of the dead—though the dead rest not here. A dark stain on the pavement is said to be the mark of the blood of Hassan's Vizier, slain with the Sultan's own hand.

We turned and left it to its darkness and repose. The solemn corridors through which we once more passed were again full of fantastic lights and shadows. We gave one more glance at the open court, where the shadows cast by the moon were lengthening. Cold and pure, silent and solemn, enclosed in those high, impressive walls, it looked a world apart. At the entrance porch, so grand and matchless, of such enormous dimensions, the men extinguished their torches. The flickering lights and shadows disappeared, and with them the feeling that we were in a ghost-haunted atmosphere. In truth it was near cockcrow, and time for all respectable ghosts to depart.

At the foot of the shabby flight of steps—such a porch ought to have had a magnificent approach, and a series of steps rivalling the Valhalla—our carriage was waiting. The petrified servants had returned to life, and no doubt were willingly homeward bound. But Osman was esteemed amongst them; theirs was no mere lip and eye service; they were ready to perform wonders for him.

The streets were empty and deserted, yet after that solemn interior, the gloom and silence and space of that death chamber, it was a return to life and the world. Even the dark and shuttered houses looked animated. The sleeping guardians on the doorsteps were so many evidences of humanity, less pitiable than they had seemed earlier in the night. "Who passes by this way so late?" they probably asked of themselves, though, as far as we could see, they never moved or stirred. It only concerned them to bar their master's entrance. We woke the echoes as the horses went down at a quick gallop. We had wished to return to our own quarters. Osman would not hear of it. "You must come and be refreshed with coffee and Egyptian wines and baked meats," he declared. "Our experiences are exhausting, and the inner man must not be neglected. At your hotel they are all slumbering and sleeping; scarcely will a heavy-eyed porter find consciousness to unbar and unbolt to you. I am at home and we are expected."

So reaching the Esbekeeyeh Square, we turned to the left instead of the right, and soon found ourselves in the scenes of the earlier part of the evening.

It was difficult to realize whether hours or days had passed since a groom of the chambers had entered to announce that the carriage waited, so much had we gone through. Thoughts and emotions had crowded upon each other both when looking out upon a dead world from the minaret, and when enclosed in a dead world in the Mosque of Hassan. Now we had returned to light and brilliancy and warmth;

A Cairene Cobbler.

to refinement and luxury; to a table spread with a slight but exquisite repast, to which perhaps only one of the three could do justice. H. was at a period of life when the hospitality of the festive board is seldom offered in vain. One almost envies this privilege of youth; especially when to the "hectic flush of health" is added a clear eye and a good conscience. For the other two, the glamour and illusions of youth were over; life's realities were making themselves heard. A curiously-shaped urn of rare workmanship and design was steaming near the table, upon which stood a silver coffee-pot. Egyptian wines of the best were there, but we would none of them.

"We will make the coffee ourselves," laughed Osman. "I am not clever at most of these things, but I can accomplish this simple matter to perfection. Watch the process, so that you may become as wise as myself in an art which is especially Eastern."

So, the mind unbending, we became children, and made and drank our coffee, and did not altogether neglect the delicacies so thoughtfully provided. Wisely too, for they stirred up fresh life and energy, and we felt fortified for the first glimmerings of dawn we saw in the east. The cocks were crowing when Osman bade us farewell on his very threshold, where the faint dawn lighted up his admirable countenance.

"As I said this morning, so I say now," he cried. "*A rivederci!* In a few hours we will meet again. We have seen the Tombs of the Caliphs by day and night; the Mosque of Hassan by torchlight and moonlight; we will now see it by daylight, as well as some of the other mosques in Cairo. No capital is so rich in these marvellous buildings; and they are of many periods and in every stage varying between perfection and decay. At ten o'clock I will call for you."

The quiet walk back to the hotel in the early morning was a delicious experience, and was over too soon. The sleepy night porter, as Osman had predicted, was scarcely conscious enough to open to us. He was in his last heavy slumber and needed much arousing.

H. made straight for his room, where no doubt he was soon dreaming of moonlit worlds and festive boards. But the fragrant coffee had fairly aroused us; the hour for sleep had passed and Somnus had fled; a wakeful pillow is one of life's burdens; we knew it by experience, having "passed that way," as the French so well put it.

So we quietly climbed up to the roof and sat amongst the chimney-pots, and once more watched all the varying and magnificent phases of sunrise. Presently we should return to a land where all these Eastern effects are not. Our gorgeous sunrises and sunsets, our rainbow atmospheres, all the picturesqueness and poetry of this Oriental life, would pass beyond our every-day horizon. Under the grey skies and chilling east winds of England—satirically described in a German geography of the last century as "a small island situated near the coast of France"—in this insular home of ours we should look back upon these days as the fabric of a vision: a celestial experience. Such

a sky and sunrise as we saw that morning brought us in truth nearer heaven than earth.

We knew that Osman possessed the royal virtue of punctuality, and at ten o'clock to the minute his equipage turned the corner which brought him in sight of us. A few moments more and we were making way through the usual crowd of people and donkeys with their freights of tourists: all the wonderful contrasts presented by the streets of Cairo: the mixture of ancient and modern, of old world and new world, of Eastern and European people, manners and customs, more perceptible here than in any other city.

A few hours ago, we had rattled through the empty and deserted streets, awaking the echoes and startling the sacred cats. Now we were scarcely heard. Sights and sounds distracted the mind; but it was impossible not to be keenly interested. It is all gradually passing away. The Cairo of one's imagination, of the *Arabian Nights*, is daily giving way to European influence. More and more, the traces of the Ancient Egyptians, of the Caliphs and Mamelukes, all the wonders and individuality of the Middle Ages, are yielding to the progress of the age, the fatal *rapprochement* of all countries towards each other. Time and space are becoming mere terms.

Thus Cairo is no longer absolutely Oriental. The charm of the Saracenic atmosphere has been broken into and barbarously interrupted by a nightmare of Italian houses and modern palaces of worse than no school of architecture, by a thousand and one erections that are true Canaanites in the world of design. Nowhere was the purely Saracenic influence so predominant as in Cairo. The Byzantine and Syrian Schools are far more evident in such towns as Aleppo and Damascus. But Cairo has still sufficient to cause it to stand out above all other towns in interest.

This morning all the daily scenes and experiences were repeated. The faithful guardians had rolled up their sacking and departed; the doors stood open. The water-carriers were clinking their metal cups as an accompaniment to their hideous cries. Their curious goat-skins looked like petrified unknown animals thrown across their backs. The travelling cooks were in full force and in great demand; whilst the money-changers at the corners of the streets seemed more lynx-eyed, more eagle-clawed, than ever.

"There passes a caravan," said Osman, as we approached the Place Roumeeleh. "I wonder what part of Africa or Arabia it comes from. What are those patient, solemn-looking camels laden with? A strange life, this crossing and recrossing the desert plains. What toil the world goes through for its daily bread! Yet there must be a great charm in this slow-moving, roving life. Compare the prosiness of a journey by train with the romance of crossing the wilderness! After all, these Oriental merchants are more to be envied than their European brothers. But we are at the Mosque of Hassan. Let us compare this morning with last night's impressions."

We had passed the great doorway for the sake of looking round upon the great Roumeeleh Square. Leaving the carriage here, we retraced our steps and entered. Aleck, our dragoman, was not with us. We had given him a holiday, but to judge from his countenance the leisure meant penance to him. He was never so happy as when, under the shelter of our presence and indirect authority, he was lording it over Sheykhs and guardians, administering castigations right and left upon lazy wayfarers, riding rough-shod through stern rules and regulations, and generally making himself felt as a despotic monarch. To exchange all this reign and excitement for a mere lounge in the corridors of the hotel, or a stroll through the streets, was not happiness but misery to him. There was even a pleasure, a sense of power in administering backsheesh on our behalf; an intense gratification in hearing, but not heeding, the evidently wicked words bestowed upon him by the avaricious and extortionate recipients of his limited bounty. When not with us, he looked upon the day as lost: and misery only second to a day with his two wives.

Once more we passed into the Mosque of Hassan; once more found ourselves within the small vestibule crowned with its cupolas, leading through the sombre corridor to the semicircular recess where the Sultan was wont to address the people.

The open court, a dream in the pure pale moonlight not many hours ago, was now flooded with sunshine. In the broad light of day it lost its ethereal, ghostly, thrilling aspect, but, in recompense, every detail stood out boldly defined; the wonderful beauty of the court was at once apparent. The outlines were simple but majestic; it was a combination of architecture and colouring, harmonious and singularly impressive.

Not least effective were the towering walls that seemed to seclude it from the outside world. This morning we could see that the pavement was of different coloured marbles, and that blocks of different coloured marbles formed the arches. The ruinous condition of the fountains was more evident. On the north side was a magnificent prayer-niche of exquisite beauty, which we had not examined last night. A few steps raised it above the level of the court. The exterior walls were splendidly adorned with arabesques. A horse-shoe arch, nearly seventy feet high, covered the entrance. Rich arabesques also lined the inner walls. Small lamps were suspended from the ceiling. High up, two windows rich in coloured glass threw their beautiful rays upon the interior. Nothing could be more solemn and imposing.

We passed from this flood of sunlight into the sanctuary. Torches were no longer needed, but everything was steeped in a dim religious light, yet further subdued in the Tomb Chamber beyond.

We could appreciate this morning the dimensions of the great dome, last night obscured in gloom. The bareness and dilapidations of the chamber were more marked. We noticed and admired the

THE SCHOOL OF SULTAN HASSAN.

corbelling which so cunningly effected the transition from the circular dome to the square walls; and saw that the pendentives were indeed falling to pieces.

Above the Mihrab was a rose window of beautiful design, but the ironwork of the long open-work windows had disappeared under the hand of time. The influence of the Italian school upon the mind of the architect was very visible as we went from one part of the Mosque to another. But the building as a whole was harmonious, majestic, and characterised by that singular beauty which causes the mosques of Cairo to stand out so conspicuously amongst the great buildings of the world.

"After all," said Osman, as we stood in the centre of the open court, giving a last look around, "Mohammedanism has been a great power. In most Eastern countries it has left its traces. The False Prophet, ignorant in so many ways, at least understood the type of man for which he laid down his rules and ordinances. They are educated up to the Koran, which asks no impossibilities, imposes few restraints. Self-indulgence is no great crime with them; self-denial and self-sacrifice are scarcely amongst the canons of their creed. They have no need to go to auricular confession or purchase indulgences. The evil of the one and the hypocrisy of the other they have kept out of their lives. Other faults they have no doubt in abundance, but they come from within, not from without. Sincerity is one of their merits, simply because great efforts and great restraints are not asked of them. I doubt if the pure, self-denying religion of Christianity could ever become the accepted religion of these people. Certainly no earthly power will effect the change. Preached amongst them it may be; accepted by the few who have minds and souls above their fellows, and who before all things see the 'beauty of holiness.' There is no limit to the Divine Power, and the Divine will can accomplish the impossible, but nothing less can ever Christianise the East, and we do not know that it has to be done or was ever intended. It is stated in your Bible that the Gospel shall be preached amongst all nations; it does not say that all nations are to accept it. It may be part of the Divine plan that Mohammedanism shall reign to the end of all things. Then, and then only, all the false must fall away and all the true must stand. But it is useless to exercise our minds with problems that belong to the eternal and the unseen, and of which the solution rests with a Divine Creator. And now, as we have many mosques to visit, and time tarries not, let us away to other and not less interesting scenes."

We passed off the sacred pavement and exchanged the straw slippers for our more comfortable possessions. The guardians crouched low before Osman, and accepted the coin he quietly slipped into their hand without daring to consider its weight. Had he offered them nothing, they would still have accompanied him to the outer door and dismissed him with a benediction, praying his good word with those in authority.

Within the Mosque all had been silence and solemnity; a withdrawal from the world to a region where "all was piety and all was peace." In one moment we passed away from it all to a busy crowd, a noisy throng, a wonderful picture of Eastern life and manners, and Eastern sounds. The eye was dazzled and the ear startled. But, as we have before said, of the strange and singular interest of this wonderful scene there could be no doubt. The only living creature that seemed unaffected by its surroundings was the patient, plodding, meek-eyed, heavily-burdened camel. Even the thought of approaching rest, after a long journey through the sandy wastes of the desert, was insufficient to bring elasticity to its step or a flash to its gaze. Like the skies, it remained calm and unmoved in the midst of life's tempests and dramas.

We had soon left the Mosque of Hassan behind us; but our present limit has been reached, and upon the principle that a guest must not wear out his welcome by too long a sojourn, we must not overtax the patience of a too lenient reader. We cannot here enter upon the charms of the other mosques that we visited that day under the guidance of our admirable friend Osman: mosques that abound in Cairo, and make it of all Eastern cities the most remarkable and the most interesting.

THE DEAD CHILDREN.

As naught had been—no sound the stillness bears,
The bells cease tolling and the chauntings die;
And I grow calm with the relief of tears,
Since earth's last rites, at length, have all passed by.
Whilst in my dwelling still the white forms lay
I sought in vain what I, resigned, had given;
They seemed as homeless wanderers to stray
With mournful looks between the earth and heaven.
But now 'tis over: and I sit and dream.
Oh! there—midst leafy depths of glade and tree
So near and yet how far—the children seem
To smile as once on earth they smiled for me.
And the sun sets, and darker shadows rise,
The illusion fades—grey mists the landscape dress—
I look above—and there in distant skies
Is eve's last blush, and all my happiness!

C. E. Meetkerke.

MR. WARRENNE:
MEDICAL PRACTITIONER.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE SICK LIST.

LEONARD had now been six months at the office. His employers spoke well of him; his fellow-clerks respected and liked him. He could not be intimate with them, for he was made altogether of different materials. He never confided to them what he thought or felt, but he was cheerful and frank in his manners; jocose with Mr. Mills, who loved to be jested with; and civil to those with whom he had less to do.

Whether it dawned slowly into Mr. Courtenay's head that he was of rather a better grade than the others, or not, he became gradually more scrupulous in his behaviour to him. This change first made itself known by his discovery that Leonard's name was not Cooke. He was not quite sure that he was the person referred to, when Courtenay first called him Mr. Warrenne. And this was the occasion on which it happened. He was taking a copy of a German letter which Mr. Courtenay had written to a correspondent at Hamburg, when that gentleman, coming down from one of the upstairs rooms, paused and looked to see what he was doing.

"I have made that feminine," said he, pointing with the head of his stick to an adjective in his letter; "you may as well make it masculine in the copy, Mr. Warrenne."

"I have done so," said Leonard, glancing at his copy; for he was so good a German scholar that he had written the word right by instinct. Then, after a pause, he added, shyly, "Would you like to alter the original?"

The term struck Mr. Courtenay, who, among many other peculiarities, was fastidious to excess. He thought a low person would have said *correct*, instead of *alter*.

"Oh no, thank you," he replied; and added, as he was walking away, "You know German better than I do."

Leonard naturally thought that the sky was likely to fall, after this wonderful concession; but the next day he heard that Mr. Courtenay was gone into the country for a few weeks, and Maud's letters soon gave him the information that he was staying at the Ferns. She merely mentioned that she had seen him there, but entered into no particulars respecting his visit.

He happened to be alone in the office when Mr. Courtenay did return. It need not be said that he disliked him pretty cordially, and the more so as Mr. Thomason, the head partner, was particularly courteous, and even friendly, to him in his manners.

What was his surprise when Mr. Courtenay, on walking into the room, took off his hat, set it on the table, and then, coming up to Leonard's desk, leaned his back against it, and said in an easy tone :

"How do you do, Mr. Warrenne?"

Leonard, with a slight bow, returned the salutation, concluded that Mr. Courtenay had taken something stronger than coffee that morning, and then dipped his pen.

"I had the pleasure of seeing a part of your family at Erlesmede," said Mr. Courtenay. "They were perfectly well, I am glad to tell you."

Leonard looked up at his companion, who seemed to have settled himself for a gossip, thanked him for his information, and went on writing.

"Hard at it!" said Mr. Courtenay, watching his progress.

Leonard smiled.

"You know the Creswicks, I believe?" said Courtenay.

"Yes; I have known them since my return from abroad," replied Leonard.

"Mrs. Creswick is a very old friend of mine," said Courtenay. "I find she has a niece staying with her at present."

Leonard tried to write very steadily.

"Miss Reynolds tells me that you waltz admirably," continued Courtenay.

"Miss Reynolds was making herself merry at my expense," replied Leonard, with composure.

"She spoke with great fervour, I assure you. Are you fond of dancing?"

"It is out of my way now," returned Leonard, calmly; "I liked it very well abroad."

"But I am interrupting you," said Mr. Courtenay, moving a little away.

"My time is not my own," answered Leonard, courteously, for he was never abrupt, even to those persons whom he disliked.

Mr. Courtenay took the hint, and left him; but whenever he passed through the office, he always asked him how he was, and made some trifling remark; and Leonard puzzled over this singular change of behaviour without coming to any satisfactory conclusion.

One day it chanced that Leonard, who had caught a bad cold, was coughing repeatedly as he was at his work. Mr. Courtenay, who was standing giving some directions to Mr. Mills, turned round and said :

"What an infernal cough you have got!"

Leonard, thinking that this was an ebullition of spleen, because the sound of his cough disturbed Mr. Courtenay's conversation, said nothing, but tried to control it.

Mr. Mills said in a surly tone, "Mr. Warrenne got wet through the other day, sir."

"How did that come about?" said Mr. Courtenay, addressing Leonard.

"I happened to be caught in the rain," replied Leonard.

"And you never will carry an umbrella," said Mr. Mills, who had become so fond of Leonard as to take an interest in all his proceedings.

"But I do not like an umbrella, Mr. Mills," replied Leonard.

"Young people ought not to go by what they like," returned Mr. Mills.

Leonard laughed, and Mr. Courtenay, finding that Mr. Mills had presumed to mingle in the dialogue, began to sing, and walked away.

In the course of the afternoon, as Leonard was putting up a packet of papers, Mr. Courtenay came in. The rain was pouring down as it sometimes does pour in November.

"Where are you going, eh?" said Courtenay.

"To Somerset House, with these letters," said Leonard.

"What! in this rain?" asked Courtenay.

"Certainly," replied Leonard, with a smile.

"I will leave them as I drive past," said Courtenay, quickly.

Leonard's astonishment was unbounded; but he replied that he was much obliged to Mr. Courtenay, but he could not accept his kindness.

To this remark Mr. Courtenay made answer by holding out his hand for the papers.

"You are very good," said Leonard; "but this is a part of my business. I am answerable if these letters are mislaid or forgotten. You will excuse me if I seem ungracious, but I must take them myself;" and reaching his hat, he passed Mr. Courtenay with a bow, and went out into the street.

But a long walk in the rain did not improve his cough. The next day he was almost too ill to go down to the office, and his cough was unremitting.

Mr. Mills, on the other side of the green curtain, gave him a good many recipes for bad colds, and lectures on the use of umbrellas.

"You will have to lay by," said Mr. Mills. "I am sure Mr. Thomason will give you leave. I will ask him if you like."

"Thank you," said Leonard; "do not let us be in a hurry. I shall be able to go on for some time yet; for I have an idea that when I do give in, it will be for good."

Mr. Mills swore violently at this announcement, for it affected his feelings.

Leonard coughed and wrote without interruption.

"I will tell you what," said Mr. Mills; "if you don't take such a cold as that in time, it will end in the churchyard."

"But it is a very easy death, Mr. Mills," said Leonard, reaching down a ledger.

"What is an easy death?" asked Mr. Mills, gruffly.

"Consumption," returned Leonard.

"Do you mean to say that it is in your family?"

"My mother died of it, but in her case it was not constitutional, and so we may hope not to have inherited it. But your agreeable conversation distracts me, and I have a profound calculation to make here."

Mr. Mills got up and left the office.

"I hope I have not offended the old fellow," said Leonard, half-aloud, as he continued his writing; "but it is impossible to work and talk at the same time."

"Is that your opinion?" asked Mr. Courtenay, who was standing behind him.

Leonard started a little, and then said, calmly, "I thought I was alone."

"Why, I have been here for the last five minutes," said Mr. Courtenay.

Leonard made no answer.

"I have been admiring your politeness to that curious old monster," continued Courtenay. "Why don't you cut him short?"

"I am in the same station," replied Leonard, still more coolly; "any rudeness on my part would be worse than wrong—it would be ridiculous."

Mr. Courtenay remained leaning against the desk, turning about his stick. At last he looked up and said:

"You had better let me drive you home at once."

"Thank you," said Leonard, smiling; "if I were to take myself off now, I should stand a good chance of being dismissed in the morning."

"Ah! what's the term they have for being dismissed?" asked Courtenay, as if thinking.

"I never heard it," returned Leonard; "I know very little of my companions."

"And yet you talk of being in their station," said Courtenay; "it is too good!"

Mr. Mills came back at this moment, looking very important, with the news that he had spoken to Mr. Thomason, and that Mr. Warrenne was not to return to the office until he was entirely recovered of his cough.

Leonard looked half-vexed and half-gratified. It was very good-natured of Mr. Mills to take so much interest in his welfare, but there was nothing he hated so much as any fuss made about his ailments.

"And now, perhaps, you will let me drive you home," said Courtenay, "unless you have a predilection for a natural shower-bath. Not the least trouble. It is all in my way."

Notwithstanding this consideration on the part of Mr. Courtenay, Leonard's cough was worse the next day. Like all men, he was very

nervous and impatient of illness, and the solitude of his lodging did not improve his spirits; he was in the last stage of depression, when, to his unbounded amazement, the door of his room opened, and Mr. Courtenay walked in. He had not got over his wonder at that gentleman's condescension in driving him home, and what miracle brought him to his lodgings he was still farther from comprehending. Indeed, he was likely to assign any cause but the true one to this singular change; he little dreamed that Maud had wrought the alteration.

Mr. Courtenay was the last person to persevere, or to cherish an attachment that was not returned. He would have made any sacrifice, any exertion to secure her regard. He had never forgotten his first brief interview with her, for some lurking bit of sentiment is not uncommonly found in those characters which disclaim it altogether; yet as soon as he felt convinced that he could not succeed in winning her, he dismissed her image from his mind by an effort of which his character, trained and hardened by circumstances, was capable. But towards her brother he showed the same interest that he would have done had his suit to the sister been successful.

"So, you are worse," said Courtenay, taking a chair: "what have you done to get better? Have you sent for a doctor?"

"No," replied Leonard; "I shall write to my father if I do not get better soon."

"You are quite right to put it off as long as you possibly can," said Courtenay, drily, "because then, either way, his advice will be perfectly useless."

Leonard, not knowing whether he spoke in jest or earnest, was silent.

"Well, I have brought you some books," continued his visitor. "German ones—I suppose you like German literature. People generally think there is something very grand in their rambling nonsense. Here is a little book called 'Moonshine'; it will just suit you."

Leonard smiled and thanked him.

"Schiller?" said Courtenay, looking into a volume that lay on the table. "Ah! when you are older you will read Shakespeare. But these second-rate minds are a bad preparation. You would do well to put Schiller into the fire."

Leonard endeavoured to obtain a milder verdict for the great German. He urged his power and facility in the ballad; the versatile character of his genius; the stately beauty of 'Wallenstein'; the fire and pathos of 'Don Karlos.'

"All very fine," said Courtenay, "but there are things to be had which are finer. Do you think he ever wrote so grand a ballad as 'Chevy Chase'? Do you call 'Wallenstein' as good a tragedy as Forde's 'Perkin Walbeck'? And as for 'Don Karlos,' the finest tragedy in the world would be ruined by the admission of such a blunderer as Von Posa."

"Von Posa!" echoed Leonard, who had always been in the habit of considering his character as the gem of the piece.

"You admire him, do you?" said Courtenay, taking up the book. "Yes, he engages our interest from the very first. He sets out in life with an act of cowardice of which every Eton schoolboy would be ashamed—throws a shuttlecock into an old woman's eye, and then allows the Prince to bear the penalty of his fault."

"But he regrets that episode in his history," said Leonard, pointing to the lines—

> "O stille Prinz von diesen kindischen
> Geschichten, die mich jetzt noch schamroth machen!"

"Much good that did," said Courtenay. "I hate a knave; but I think I hate him more if he is sorry for it. And then the quantity of vague philanthropic nonsense he talks to the King proves him to be an idiot of the first water!"

"Nay," said Leonard, "I cannot but think his appeal to Philip in behalf of the Netherlands, full of eloquence and moral courage, and dictated by the purest feelings of humanity."

"Well, I allow him to be a well-meaning creature in some respects," returned Courtenay, "but destitute of the faintest gleam of common-sense. Where was the use of raving about liberty of conscience to the greatest bigot that ever sat on the throne of Spain? And then, after floundering from one absurd plot to another, to be shot like a dog, because he could not help it! A fit end for a man who had not skill enough to play his own game!"

"But his aim throughout was to defend the Prince at his own expense," said Leonard.

"And, like a clumsy fellow, lost himself, and did his friend no good," returned Courtenay. "But it is a fine poem, after all. The character of Elizabeth is exquisite, and that of Karlos so highly coloured, that one speaks no treason in naming him along with Hamlet. That is a grand scene after the death of Posa: there is one passage in which he bursts upon the King with such a torrent of invective—stay—it begins——"

As Mr. Courtenay turned the leaves of the book to find the speech, there fell from it a card, on which the following names were written with a pencil:—O'Neill, De Merville, Taylor, Le Grange, Roxby.

Courtenay, thinking that it was a list of the *dramatis personæ*, glanced over it.

"Eh?" said he, handing it to Leonard.

He had never been so confounded in his life. He remembered having put down the names of the five conspirators, as he termed them, the day on which he heard them spoken of by the military cousin.

It was the most awkward thing in the world. He could not explain the circumstance; and to have written those names down at

random looked, to say the least of it, a little like insanity. After gazing on the card with an air of great vexation, he threw it angrily into the fire.

Mr. Courtenay remained contemplating him in silence for a minute with a quiet smile, and then said:

"You became very intimate, of course, with Miss Reynolds when you were at Erlesmede?"

"I saw her occasionally," said Leonard; "my sister is very well acquainted with her aunt. I could not help meeting her sometimes."

"Ah! that was unpleasant!" said Courtenay, in a tone of sympathy.

"Not at all," replied Leonard, trying to appear quite unconcerned; "they were very pleasant people at the Ferns."

"I am glad you seem to have no particular views in that quarter," said Courtenay, ironically. "You had better leave her to O'Neill, or any one of them—they will be perfectly well-matched, depend upon it."

"As for views," returned Leonard, "it is impossible that I could entertain any with regard to a person so much above me in point of fortune and position; but I have a great respect for her, and for Mrs. Creswick, and I confess that it would be the happiest day of my life in which I could put a bullet through any one of those villains who engaged in such a detestable act of treachery!"

Mr. Courtenay looked vastly amused by the vehemence with which his companion proclaimed his wishes. "Mrs. Creswick, I am sure, would feel the compliment very keenly," he said, with a provoking smile. "By the way, I think it was with Miss Reynolds with whom you used to waltz?"

"Certainly not with Mrs. Creswick," said Leonard, smiling at the very idea of waltzing with that lady. "And I have not danced with Miss Reynolds more than two or three times, and then quite by accident, when there were a few people to dinner, and they got up a waltz in the evening."

"I left Mr. Mills mourning your absence and informing everybody that he didn't know what he should do without you," said Courtenay, as he rose to go.

"I shall not leave him to mourn long," replied Leonard. "I hope to be at my work in a day or two."

"Why, you don't like it, I am sure," said Courtenay.

"I like still less that other people should do my business," returned Leonard.

"You need not be ceremonious, you know, with such a fellow as old Mills," said Mr. Courtenay.

"Nor he with me," returned Leonard; "we are fellow-servants."

"Now, that's all pride, putting yourself on a level with him," said Mr. Courtenay.

"I spoke only of my station, which is palpable enough; I said nothing of *myself*," answered Leonard.

He looked so like Maud as he spoke.

"Bravo!" said Mr. Courtenay, shaking hands with him; "take care of yourself till I see you again. It's plain you want somebody to look after you."

For several days Mr. Courtenay visited Leonard regularly. He brought him books and magazines, and remained for some time conversing with him, as if desirous to lighten the tedium of his illness. He never again alluded to the unfortunate card, much to the relief of Leonard, who could ill bear his calm, ironical manner on the subject.

Once, having found him arranging some flowers in a glass, Mr. Courtenay brought him a large cluster of white violets, which, he said, came from Mr. Thomason's, where they grew them, and asked him carelessly if Miss Reynolds was fond of flowers. Leonard did not know; and Courtenay said that possibly, like the French lady, she was not much addicted to harmless pleasures.

In their literary discussions, Courtenay seemed to take a pleasure in mystifying him, and advancing the strangest opinions, just to hear what he would say; and Leonard observed that he always took the most matter-of-fact view possible of every subject, and that he laughed unmercifully at the colouring of romance, with which Leonard was apt to invest any topic that pleased his fancy. He even, as they grew more intimate, frequently applied to him the name of the German book that he had lent him—'Moonshine.'

But finding in a few days that he grew rather worse than better, Courtenay insisted on his going down to Erlesmede, to put himself under his father's care, and backed his advice by a message from Mr. Thomason, to the effect that he was at liberty to absent himself from the office for a few weeks in order to re-establish his health.

To Leonard this permission was like a respite from death. He had a fanciful presentiment that he should not recover in London, and that the air of Erlesmede would work his immediate cure. He wrote home instantly to apprise his family of his coming, and followed his letter down without delay.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STORM.

"LEONARD, my dear boy," said Mr. Warrenne, a few days after his son's arrival, "I shall not ride to-day; the white horse is at your service if you have a mind to go out, and it will be better for you than walking."

Leonard accepted with much pleasure.

The horse was ordered out, and he set off on a ramble across the country. It was a sort of day that Leonard particularly liked at that season of the year; dull, dark, and rather misty, with now and then a storm of wind. The night had been very boisterous, and as he rode

down the lane, a number of broken branches strewed about gave earnest of the violence of the storm. The air was not at all cold; and the wind coming from the south-west, had nothing chilling in its breath; and Leonard rode on, very like a philosopher, without caring where he went, or how far he should have to go back again. About five miles from Erlesmede there was a wide, desolate common, on the other side of which stood a broad belt of tall, spreading trees, through which the road passed. This was always a bleak, solitary part of the country, and many a tale of footpads and highway robbers was connected with the common and thicket: indeed, one particular angle of the road was called by the country people "Dead Man's Corner," in commemoration of a horrid murder, which it is needless to detail, committed on a poor man, who was buried by his assassin on the spot, and not discovered until many years after.

In crossing this common the wind rose rapidly, and with such fury, that Leonard seemed in some danger of being blown off his horse. He had half a mind to turn back, but seeing in front of him a low carriage, in which was a lady, driven by a man, he thought that if she could brave the weather, it could hardly be bad enough to check his progress. The carriage was just entering into the thicket, and might have been about a hundred yards in advance of him, when suddenly the wind swept as if in a circle: a large tree was uptorn by the roots, and fell steadily forward upon the travellers.

A sharp cry seemed to mingle with the roar of the wind and the crash of the enormous branches of the tree. Leonard reined up for a moment, completely paralysed, so sudden and yet so quiet was the work of destruction, then dashed forward to see if any assistance could yet avail the sufferers. The trunk had fallen so as to crush down one side of the low pony carriage, with the man who had been driving; the horse killed and forced down on one knee, in a strange position, with his head turned back; but the lady, by some capricious growth of the branches on that side of the tree, was providentially saved from death, or even, it seemed, from any serious injury.

But she was almost insensible from terror, and she neither replied to Leonard's anxious inquiries, nor seemed to hear what he said to her. She was leaning back in the carriage with her eyes wide open and directed forward; but it was evident that "their sense was shut." He felt in a complete dilemma. In the first place, an intricate screen of boughs intervened between him and the unfortunate lady; in the next place, he did not know what to make of her condition. She was not exactly in a swoon, nor yet in her senses; and then, again, it was possible that the unhappy man, crushed so horribly at her side, might be her husband: if so, how dreadful would be her return to consciousness.

Most gladly did he welcome the approach of a couple of woodmen, who, with axe in hand, were returning from their work. Under his direction, they cleared the branches around the lady, sufficiently to

admit of his withdrawing her from the carriage, and leading her to some distance among the trees.

After supporting her onwards for a few moments, she shuddered violently, and said indistinctly several times, "Oh, horrible!" Then, attempting to turn back, she exclaimed:

"But where is Adams? I am sure he must be terribly hurt."

"I entreat you, madam," said Leonard, holding her back; "I cannot suffer you to see him—nothing you can do will avail him—his sufferings are over."

She covered her eyes with her hands for a moment, and then suddenly looking up, exclaimed, as she pressed forward:

"We are not yet sure that nothing can be done—he may be only stunned—he is a very old servant," she added. "I shall be distressed, indeed, to lose him!"

Leonard again interposed. He knew well enough that life must be extinct; he assured her that the spectacle was appalling to himself, and quite unfit for her to witness.

The lady seemed greatly agitated, and, after a short silence, she said, in a voice so low that he could hardly catch the words:

"And to whom am I indebted for so much kindness?"

"My name is Warrenne, madam," said Leonard; "and I beg you to believe that anything I can do farther to assist you will give me much satisfaction."

"Warrenne?" exclaimed the lady, turning her eyes for the first time upon him. "Singular!"

There was a pause, during which Leonard surveyed, in his turn, the lady whom he was escorting. Every trace of youth, and of the beauty which is dependent on youth, had long left her countenance; but there remained a delightful regularity of feature, a sweetness in the dark eyes, a serenity on the brow, a repose that was intellectual, not physical, in the expression, which with some persons would make amends for the graces of which time had robbed her.

"I think I must trespass on you so far, as to beg that you will conduct me home. I believe my house is the nearest place to this," said the lady feebly; "we must send for workmen to remove this poor man. Thank God, he has no wife or family; but how to reach my house?"

"It is but an unpleasant mode of conveyance," said Leonard; "but my horse is very quiet, and if I lead him, you need not be under the least apprehension."

The lady consented immediately to this plan, and Leonard, having brought up his horse, lifted her on it, and, half supporting her on the saddle, walked by her side. They went on in silence, except from time to time, when they came to a turning, he asked her which road he was to follow. At last, after about three miles, which appeared to Leonard almost interminable, they came to a long line of plantations, after which the lady directed him to open a massive gate in a stone

archway, which led them through a thick deep wood, by a winding path, to the carved porch of a Gothic building. The man-servant who opened the hall-door looked greatly astonished to see his lady return in such a manner, and said respectfully, as she entered leaning on Leonard's arm, that he feared there had been some accident.

"An awful one!" she replied, and passed in.

As soon as she reached the drawing-room she sank into a low chair, and, after making some ineffectual attempts to speak, fainted away.

It was not absolutely necessary for a woman to be young and pretty to excite Leonard's sympathy and interest, but this was a case in which he could do nothing beyond ringing the bell and consigning her to the care of her maid; and then, feeling that he had been absent an unconscionable time, and that those at home would be anxious for his return, and not thinking it at all necessary to remain to receive the lady's thanks for his services, he went out into the hall and asked for his horse. The quiet grey-haired servant who answered his application, detained him a few moments to ask an account of the adventure, which Leonard gave, to his infinite horror and surprise, and he learned, in his turn, that the name of the lady he had assisted was Mrs. Digby, and the poor man who was killed was her steward. He had driven his lady to some almshouses on the other side of her estate, and was returning when the fatal accident occurred.

"It was, then, Mrs. Digby whom I met so strangely," said Leonard, on hearing her name.

"Mrs. Digby of Forrel Court," said the quiet servant, with a slight increase of importance in his manner.

Leonard looked up at the old scutcheon in front of the ancient porch, with the idea that he either knew or ought to know something of the person bearing that name, but the chevron guilds and the eagles' heads in chief did not appear to enlighten him, and, returning the courteous salutation of the old man, he rode slowly off.

He had not overrated the anxiety which his sisters would be feeling at his absence. When he returned, they were waiting in the most painful uncertainty; and Mr. Scudamore, who had dropped in to drink tea, as he did about every other night, was promising Maud that he would set out to look for him in another ten minutes. Even Mr. Warrenne was walking up and down the room; a sure sign with him of being thoroughly uncomfortable.

His narrative was eagerly listened to by the whole party. Maud thought it an adventure; Mr. Scudamore proclaimed it a coincidence; Mr. Warrenne said nothing, but sighed deeply once or twice; and Alice, drawing nearer to him, whispered:

"The grandfather told us, papa, that Mrs. Digby was in love with you a great many years ago."

"He made a little mistake, my dear," said Mr. Warrenne quietly; and Alice asked no more questions.

While they were at tea, Dinah entered with a note for Mr. Warrenne; a few lines from Mrs. Digby—she had assumed the matronly prefix with advancing years—begging him to visit her immediately, and stating that her carriage should fetch him and bring him back.

"How very odd!" said Maud, when her father was gone; "Mrs. Digby has never had papa before."

"Then you may depend on it she was never ill," said Mr. Scudamore.

"Not ill for thirty years! What a fortunate person!" said Maud. "But I shall regret Leonard's share in the adventure if it increases his cough."

"I am quite well," said Leonard; "I began to mend directly I got out of London. Courtenay said that I should."

"It seems so strange to hear you speak familiarly of that horrid person," said Maud, smiling.

"If it had not been for him, I should not have come down at all," said Leonard. "I told you his manner was quite altered."

"I cannot understand it," said Alice.

Maud turned away her head.

"Hollo! Somebody else wanting your father," said Mr. Scudamore, as the gate bell rang violently.

"Papa will be quite *répandu* if this goes on!" cried Maud, rising. "Come, Alice, let us give the grandfather a duet."

She had not finished speaking, when the door flew open, and Mrs. Thorne, all splashed and out of breath, hurried into the room.

"Oh, you are a pretty father!" said she, going straight up to her astonished brother—"a very pretty father on my word; to be out drinking tea when your son is come home—in a post-chaise and four, straight from Hastings; the ship went to pieces not five hours ago,—the hurricane, you know,—tore up three trees in the cowslip meadow, and a mercy he was saved at all, seeing he was so lame. And how are you getting on, Master Leonard?"

"What! Dick come home?" said Scudamore, starting up, and laughing to conceal his emotion; "and shipwrecked too—ha! ha! Then, Queen Maud, I am off. I shall bring him here as soon as possible, you may depend, just to hear your opinion of him."

Mr. Scudamore was outside the door in an instant; but Mrs. Thorne lingered a moment behind to say:

"He's very handsome, if he was not so yellow; but, as I said to Louisa, beauty has nothing at all to do with it—not that I ever thought Thompson so ugly as they all did—he would have been drowned if a gentleman had not helped him into a boat—three trees in the cowslip meadow—but he is in a hurry. Good-night!"

CHAPTER XIV.

DIVIDED INTERESTS.

It will easily be believed that the village had enough to talk about for some time to come. The wonderful escape of Mrs. Digby went through a great variety of editions; but everybody seemed to agree that Leonard Warrenne had some share in the adventure. This was remarkably near the truth, for a village narrative. Of course a good many people stoutly maintained that it was Leonard who had been crushed by the tree, and benevolently carried by Mrs. Digby to her house, where he was now lying, slowly recovering from his accident, under her careful nursing. For it is a very common practice in rural districts to retain a slight outline of the particulars in any little affair of this kind, and to reverse the parts which the people concerned in it have played. Leonard's appearance at church, on the following Sunday, tendered rather to contradict the prevailing opinions, particularly as he bore no traces of having been a victim.

It was rather a pity that Captain Scudamore, who had for the last few days divided with Leonard the curiosity of the gossip of the village, was unable to show himself at church on the same day. A man who had just been shipwrecked, and saved from drowning by the exertions of Sir Frederic Manning, a gentleman whose eccentricities were the talk of the county, would have been equally exposed to the scrutiny of the congregation. But the injury he had received in his knee had been so aggravated by the hurry and exertion of escaping from the wreck, that he was for the present a close prisoner to his room, and threatened by Mr. Warrenne with *tic-douloureux* if he infringed his directions. Leonard, therefore, had the attention of the parish all to himself. One would think they had never seen a young man of twenty before! He could not turn his head or raise his eyes without finding fifty inquiring looks fastened upon his face. Miss Reynolds alone seemed not to share in the general curiosity. Mrs. Creswick gave him a nod and a kindly smile; and the little Colonel paused to whisper to him, over the pew door, that he was "quite a hero." But Florence, after a quick sudden glance, and a slight increase of colour as she passed him, swept on in her black velvet bonnet and crimson cachemire, determined to look haughty and indifferent.

The service proceeded; and Mr. Ranger, in that calm and sonorous voice that charmed even his *un-friends* to attention, gave out, after the names of one or two sick persons who begged for the prayers of the congregation, that "Richard Scudamore desired to return thanks to Almighty God for his late escape from shipwreck."

Alice felt the colour rise to her cheeks, and the tears to her eyes; she could hardly explain to herself why she was thus affected; but she could not get those few words out of her head during the whole service.

"I was so pleased," she said, reverting with a little hesitation to

the circumstance as she was walking home with her sister; "I felt glad, Maud, for your sake."

"For *my* sake," exclaimed Maud; "dear Alice, pray be glad for the young man. It is a good thing to find that he has a little decency; but pray don't jumble him and me together in your head! Leonard, do make haste; there is Mrs. Creswick loitering at the gate on purpose to speak to you."

"I won't keep you back, then," said Leonard; "but I am going with Mr. Scudamore to the Woodlands to be introduced to his son."

"Oh, then run, dear!" cried Maud; "such a treasure as Dick ought not to be kept waiting for his dinner or his luncheon, or whatever he has at this time of day. My love to the grandfather; and tell Mrs. Thorne that if her patience wears thin, she had better hand Dick over to Jack Robins, and come and stay with me till he gets well again."

Mrs. Creswick *was* lingering by the churchyard gate to see Leonard. She had always liked him very much; and she had been rather surprised to find that he had been at home some days without calling upon her. It crossed her mind at first that there might be some coolness between Leonard and her niece; for she was well aware that Florence exercised her power and her caprice upon all who approached her; and she had sometimes thought with anxiety that his countenance betrayed more interest than was quite within the limits of acquaintanceship; but upon mentioning carelessly one morning to Florence that she had half expected young Warrenne to have paid them a visit, it did not quite appear that Florence remembered who he was, and when she was made to understand that her aunt was speaking of Mr. Warrenne's son, her manner expressed such total indifference as to whether he came or stayed away, that Mrs. Creswick hoped and concluded she was mistaken in her inference. She did not know how often Florence had loitered about the garden and paced the laurel walk in the hope that Leonard might be coming to see her; how often she had thought over their last scene with bitter vexation at the part she had played, how she had wondered at herself when all was over, how she had resolved that her future manner should be all kindness, all consideration, when they met; not that she could ever marry a young man with his prospects, but that, she reluctantly confessed to herself, she loved him. It seemed as if the ideal and romantic picture of friendship which Leonard had wished to establish between them had been transferred into her mind; she fancied that it would be delightful to promote his interests, to be his confidant, to receive his homage, and to reign over his heart, without surrendering her own. But when day after day passed without his calling, she felt that her power had passed away; she tried to become careless, and assumed an indifference that was hardly natural towards an intimate acquaintance, in order to conceal from all eyes the keenness of her mortification.

"I was just waiting to speak to my old friend Leonard," said Mrs. Creswick, as Maud came up; "has he been ill or busy that we have never seen him?"

"He has been ill, my dear Mrs. Creswick," replied Maud, "and the first day he ventured out he met with an adventure that brought back his cough—to-day is only his second appearance."

"And how has he vanished now?" said Mrs. Creswick; "I saw him come out of church with you."

"Mr. Scudamore carried him off to see his son," replied Maud.

"Perhaps you can give us the true version of this affair of your brother's," said Florence, turning coldly to Maud. "Had he anything to do with saving Captain Scudamore?"

"Nothing at all," replied Maud, with equal coolness.

"Oh, no; it was Sir Frederic Manning!" exclaimed Alice.

Mrs. Creswick smiled; Florence coloured angrily.

"Oh, Sir Frederic is the hero, instead of your brother!" said Florence.

"Just so," returned Maud.

"You never go to balls, I think," remarked Florence, as they walked on.

"Never," replied Maud.

"Perhaps you do not dance?"

"I have learned," replied Maud quietly.

"Sir Frederic's name puts me in mind of the R—— ball," said Florence; "he came in shooting-jacket, never danced, and behaved so very oddly!"

"I am almost afraid that young man drinks," said Mrs. Creswick.

"My dear aunt," cried Florence, laughing, "you are 'almost afraid' of a fact that the whole county has recognised ever since I can remember."

"I did not know," Alice began, but she did not venture to conclude her protest against the formidable Miss Reynolds.

"Alice is going to tell us something that we shall all be glad to hear, in favour of Sir Frederic," remarked Mrs. Creswick.

"I can tell you plenty in his favour, my dear Mrs. Creswick," said Maud, who felt the tremulous pressure of her sister's hand on her arm, and who cared nothing for the half-shut eyes of Miss Reynolds. "Papa often says, that he nowhere sees such active kindness as that of Sir Frederic to his tenants. When he hears of any case of distress or illness, he never rests until he has done all in his power to alleviate it. And his conduct at the wreck was really very daring, for the sea was so rough that nobody would venture to save the passengers, until he led the way."

"I think nothing of these adventures," said Florence; "every gentleman is supposed to be brave. Besides, that proves nothing against his drinking."

As she spoke, a horseman, riding at the most reckless speed, passed

them; leaped a gate at a little distance down the road, and continued his way at the same rate across the fields.

"There goes your hero," observed Florence, turning scornfully towards Maud. "I hope you have something to say for his morality, in scouring the country after that fashion, instead of going to church! And pray add courtesy to his catalogue of virtues, in dashing past ladies and splashing them with mud as he passes. I pity your velvet cloak, my dear aunt."

"A mere trifle," said Mrs. Creswick, shaking from her mantle a few drops which had been flung up by the horse's hoofs. "And now that we have done with Sir Frederic, let me hear all about Leonard, my dear Maud."

While Maud was giving Mrs. Creswick an account of her brother, Florence, wrapping her boa closer round her throat, walked briskly forward, as if she felt the cold; and then lingering at the iron gate of the Ferns, waited for her aunt to come up to her.

"And the rest I think I will hear from himself," were the concluding words of Mrs. Creswick, as she joined her niece; "bring him with you, my dear, to-morrow."

"I wish I could," said Maud to Alice, as they went in at their own garden-gate; "but you know that nothing will induce him to come with me to the Ferns."

"I quite agree with him," returned Alice quietly; "Miss Reynolds is a great deal too much to encounter."

Leonard returned from the Woodlands very much pleased with his visit. Captain Scudamore had been so friendly, and had appeared so much obliged by his sitting with him for a couple of hours, that he felt much gratified.

"For it really is something unusual," he remarked to Maud, "for a gentleman to take any notice whatever of a person in my station."

Any allusion to the inferiority of his position always nettled Maud, and it was partly on this account that he started the subject.

"Your station," she exclaimed, with flashing eyes; "is there any possible occupation that could wash the old blood out of your veins? If you were to sweep the street, could that prevent you from being descended from the favourite of Charlemagne?"

"Do you know, Maud, my dear," returned Leonard, "that in the old time, any member of the noblesse who meddled with commerce, forfeited, thenceforward, all the advantages of his birth? That is the way they managed things in France. And very right, too, for nothing is more opposed to the enlightened and graceful spirit of chivalry than the habits and principles of every kind of traffic."

"You are so prejudiced on that subject," returned Maud.

"Yes; they were wise in those old times," said Leonard, warming as he went on: "the vassal, the agricultural labourer, who followed his lord to the field, might stand a chance of attracting the attention of his monarch by his services, and of passing, by the consecration

of knighthood, into the noble class; but no circumstance, no amount of wealth, could ever enable a trader to emerge from the condition in which he was born. His privileges were secured to his order; but no successful speculation, no greedy profusion of gold, could ever obtain for him an admission into the charmed circle of the aristocracy. Honour was in those days rendered to the sword and the lyre; but never to the sensual abundance, which, if it be but excessive enough, will now entitle a man to aspire to the highest society in the country."

"Well; now I could say a great deal for the merchant princes of Genoa and Venice," said Maud; "but as dinner is on the table, Master Leonard, I will rather try how I can cut up this fowl."

Maud asked no particular questions respecting Leonard's visit to the Woodlands during dinner. Mr. Warrenne disliked every species of gossip, and never indulged in details himself. He always wondered what it could signify to her, if Maud asked what such a person wore, or who such a person was going to marry. Now Maud, like a "very woman," was fond of these trifling particulars; but then, like a "very woman," she was wiser than to bore her father about them.

But, after dinner, when Mr. Warrenne was dozing in his easy-chair, and Maud and her sister had drawn close to the fire, while Leonard, lounging on the sofa, was peeling walnuts for Alice, her catechism began.

"Let me see—the grandfather dines between the services, on Sunday, does he not?" said Maud.

"He does. I took luncheon at the same time," replied Leonard.

"Does Mrs. Thorne trot about the room during dinner?" asked Maud; "she always does at luncheon; but I have never happened to dine there."

"No; but she talks all the time to Jack Robins, who stands behind her chair, about the crops and the poultry, and the neighbours. She says she cannot endure being waited on by regular servants. She calls them coxcombs. Mr. Scudamore's man never ventures to hand her a dish."

"How she would rejoice in Karl!" said Alice, laughing. "I am sure nobody could accuse him of being a regular servant."

"Yes; she says we are very fortunate in Karl; but, I tell you, there is one thing she would miss dreadfully—Karl could never bring her all the scandal of the village, as Jack Robins does."

"True; that would be a great loss," said Maud; "but, now let us approach our great subject. Alice is longing to hear a full, true, and particular account of Dick!"

"Oh, Maud!" interposed Alice.

"I am sure Alice has no curiosity about him," said Leonard; "but I knew you would never rest long without making inquiries. Oh, he is a very nice fellow! I like his manners—he stops in his room, at present."

"There is a man's description; go on," said Maud.

"Oh, I don't know; he is very handsome, I think; he is rather like Mr. Scudamore, and he has a small hand. I thought of you, and your aversion to large-handed people!"

"A small hand! That is a decided virtue," said Maud.

"Papa has small hands," said Alice.

"But Miss Reynolds has not," added Maud.

"But such a splendid hand!" exclaimed Leonard; "so white, and beautifully formed!"

"Splendid! On the same principle that nurses persist in calling every broad, stout baby a *fine* child!"

"Oh, Maud! Jealous!" exclaimed Leonard.

"Yes; I have cause," retorted Maud, glancing down on her own slender fingers.

"Ah! that reminds me that he has never called on Mrs. Creswick," said Alice.

"True; he must go to-morrow," said Maud.

"Indeed I cannot; I am engaged to dine at the Woodlands," replied Leonard.

"They dine late on weekdays," said Maud.

"Ay; but I go early," returned Leonard.

"I told you so," said Alice, significantly.

"What did your wisdom tell her?" said Leonard, presenting Alice with the walnut he had peeled.

"That you were afraid of Miss Reynolds," replied Alice.

"Oh, that's absurd! I will go any day that I have time," said Leonard, hastily.

"But we have not done with Dick, yet," returned Maud. "What did you talk about?"

"We talked about Alberic. He gave me a description of Alberic's camel—he keeps a riding camel—and we talked about the field-sports of India. He made me long to go there."

"Long; I should think so!" exclaimed Alice. "What would I give to find myself there, but for a day!"

"Fancy, '*a day* in the East'!" said Leonard, laughing.

"Well; and what else did you talk about?" asked Maud.

"I hardly know. He asked me lots of questions, and he seemed in very good spirits; he jested with Mrs. Thorne about everything, and stuck a long peacock's feather in her old bonnet, and then begged she would go and show herself to Jack Robins."

"Was she angry?" asked Alice.

"No; she was highly delighted."

"Is it not odd she never goes to church?" asked Maud.

"There; you cannot keep to your subject, though you are so curious," said Leonard; "now I will not answer you a single question more about Dick."

"Oh! one question, Leonard," said Alice, earnestly. "I have been longing to ask you just one thing."

"I said nothing about *you*," replied Leonard; "perhaps I may answer *your* question."

"Did not Captain Scudamore ask you a great deal about Maud?"

"No, as it happened, he did not," said Leonard; "he was very inquisitive about my youngest sister; he seemed to have heard a great deal about your playing, Alice."

Alice's soft face was suffused with blushes. Maud looked a little surprised, but not at all vexed.

"And now," said she, "let us hear what the grandfather gave you for dinner?"

"My dear Maud," said Mr. Warrenne, waking up and joining in the conversation, "what can that possibly matter to any of us?"

CHAPTER XV.

MRS. DIGBY OF FORREL COURT.

Mr. Warrenne's time was now pretty much taken up between Mrs. Digby and Captain Scudamore. Mrs. Digby's health was terribly shaken by the fright she had experienced, but in a few days she persuaded Mr. Warrenne that she was sufficiently recovered to see Leonard, with whom she expressed herself very anxious to become acquainted.

Leonard could give his sisters but little account of his first visit to Mrs. Digby. He stayed only a short time—was quite confused by her expressions of gratitude, brief and graceful though they were—admired her black velvet dress, and the beautiful hands, whose pearly whiteness was still untouched by the destroying finger of time; and was quite enchanted by the sweetness of her manners. She pressed him to come the next day that he might go over her conservatories; and the day after that, that he might take home a particular flower for his father, which was to have blown by that time, but did not, and involved two or three more visits.

He soon became so intimate with Mrs. Digby, that he found himself talking to her with the openness of an old acquaintance; and she appeared to interest herself in his plans and ideas, and to draw from him his favourite pursuits and studies.

"You must come and see my garden in the summer," she said one day, observing the glances of admiration he cast from the window upon the smooth lawns and broad terraces; "it is not quite devoid of beauty at this season, but Palmer and I are very proud of it about June."

"I should be delighted," said Leonard; "but I return to London in a fortnight, and during the summer I must be contented with a less attractive prospect."

"I have an idea that you do not find the gaieties of London compensate for the pleasures of the country," remarked Mrs. Digby.

"Why, madam," said Leonard, frankly, "I have neither time nor means to share in its gaieties; and to be plain with you, my situation does not allow me access to the kind of society which alone would content me. I see nothing of London but its worst streets, and a bit of the Thames, if I have a mind to look out of the office window."

"And you do not like your employment, I am afraid," said Mrs. Digby.

"No farther than as it enables me to be independent," returned Leonard; "but that is a great comfort. I could not endure at my age to be a burden to my father."

"Perhaps you would rather have followed your father's profession," said Mrs. Digby.

"By no means, madam," replied Leonard. "I don't think there is in the world a more ill-paid servant to the public than a medical man; ill-paid, not only in money, but also in gratitude and consideration."

"It has always appeared to me," said Mrs. Digby, "that there are some occupations which in themselves tend to advance and elevate the character. The profession of a clergyman, for instance, speaks for itself; it is a devotion of all a man's energies to the highest good of his fellow-creatures; it is the closest imitation of the life of Christ that is known to us on earth. And a medical man who habitually gives his skill and his labour to the poor, as so many do, without the slightest chance of remuneration, often without even the recompense of thanks, is fulfilling one of the divinest laws of our religion. In fact, wherever self is forgotten, Mr. Leonard, the pursuit is ennobled; and those who make gain, which is the tribute money to self, the first object of their lives, depart the farthest from the Divine example."

"I believe," said Leonard, "that a medical man enjoys as much of that satisfaction which arises from disinterested labour as any one; but I can speak confidently of the great variety of annoyances to which he is exposed. As to the impertinence and ingratitude of poor people, it can never be a cause of serious vexation to a gentleman. It is all you can expect of them. But the caprice of a higher class of patients is more important, because its consequences are more injurious. The reasons for which an honest and experienced medical man is often dismissed from a family, would appear perfectly impossible to you, unless you were behind the scenes."

"I have never taken that view of the case," replied Mrs. Digby; "for I should not dream of changing a medical adviser, unless something very serious could be urged, either against his talents or his character."

"People would hesitate about withdrawing from a tradesman who served them well with bread or candles," said Leonard. "They would hardly consider themselves justified in injuring his credit by such a mark of disapproval. But the slightest whim justifies people in casting off a medical adviser; where the injury is inconceivably greater to his circumstances. For anything of popularity hangs by a

thread; and, unfortunately, his subsistence is dependent upon popular opinion. I often think that my father, if he had but been a smooth knave (for roguery in these days must either be very smooth or very rough), would have amassed a large fortune by this time."

"Instead of which he has laid up for himself the grateful prayers of the poor, and the love and respect of the rich," said Mrs. Digby.

"No, no, madam; these are the rewards of the story-books," said Leonard, laughing; "there are very few people, rich or poor, who either think or speak well of an honest man. He is an animal entirely above their comprehension. But my father has two or three staunch friends, who think that (like the king) he can do no wrong; and, 'faith, that is as much as any one can expect on this side the grave."

"You take rather a sad view of life for so young a man," said Mrs. Digby; "I wonder what it arises from. If our acquaintance were less recent I should be tempted to ask, quite generally, whether some little impediment to the course of true love is not the most likely way 'to puddle a clear spirit'?"

She smiled, without looking up, as she went on filling her netting-needle.

Leonard, relieved at not meeting her eye, coloured deeply, but disclaimed the inference; he was not so happy, he said, as to have even an unfortunate attachment.

"But do you know, I am rather sorry to hear that," said Mrs. Digby; "I owe you much obligation—and to your father still more—and I pleased myself with the idea that your happiness might be impeded by obstacles of a nature that I could remove."

"Indeed, madam," said Leonard, "your kindness to me is such that I owe you a more candid reply than the one I gave you. I *was* so deeply attached to a young lady in this neighbourhood, that I should have thought any sacrifice or suffering on my part cheaply encountered if it contributed in the least degree to her happiness; but I found that she did not comprehend me at all, and I gave up the idea, so flattering to one's vanity, of being understood."

"And shall I intrude too much upon your confidence if I ask you the name of this young lady?" asked Mrs. Digby.

"It was Miss Reynolds," replied Leonard.

"I could have guessed it, from the character she bears in the neighbourhood," said Mrs. Digby, drawing together her slender brows. "You have had a very fortunate escape. Had you been richer, you might not have found out till too late the heart she has now exposed to you. I hope," she continued, with an earnestness that rather surprised Leonard, "that if your fortunes should hereafter change, you will never be so mad as to seek her again?"

"My fortune, or rather my want of it," said Leonard, smiling, "is so definite that I shall not have the temptation, and it is generally understood that Miss Reynolds is now engaged to an officer, who is at present with his regiment."

"I rejoice to hear it," replied Mrs. Digby, "for you must be very unlike the generality of young men, Mr. Leonard, if you could resist the overtures of a practised coquette."

"I confess it," said Leonard, laughing; "but she would as soon make overtures to her footman, as to a man in my position. In resigning all thoughts of her, therefore, I do not put my philosophy to any severe trial."

"Well," said Mrs. Digby, after a pause, "you have given me your confidence, Mr. Leonard, and I am disposed, in return, to give you mine."

Leonard looked up with an expression of interest.

"If I did not consider you a very singular young man," said she with a smile, "I should not imagine that the history of a woman fifty years of age, even though your own father played a conspicuous part in it, would interest you for a single moment; I count on your attention, as a matter of course."

Leonard eagerly expressed a hope that she would continue; and very tranquilly, and working while she spoke, she went on with her narrative.

"You may have heard—at least it was all over the country before your time," pursued Mrs. Digby, "that my father left me his property under a condition so peculiar, that I was strongly urged to endeavour to set it aside. This I could under no circumstances have been induced to do. The idea of enjoying property except on the exact terms of the testator, would have been in my eyes a kind of sacrilege. This estate was bequeathed to me, provided I remained unmarried. If I married, it was to go to some distant connexion, for relations I had none. I now comprehend his motives for this singular proviso; I was left with somewhere about eight thousand a year, Mr. Leonard. My father had no great idea of the happiness of the married state, no trust in the disinterested conduct of men in general. He believed, and I agree with him, that if I loved any man well enough to resign my fortune in his favour, that love would in itself be a compensation and a reward; and that the man who would take me penniless, would be more likely to render me happy than one who might be tempted by my wealth to offer me his hand. I feel that in this arrangement he provided for my peace of mind, with a judgment far beyond what I myself possessed. For I was of a disposition that more than commonly demanded an exclusive and profound devotion, such as is not very usually accorded by your sex."

Leonard here made a movement as if he wished to justify all mankind, but he probably thought better of it, and again composed himself to listen.

"When the contents of this will were made known to me," pursued Mrs. Digby, "they occasioned me not one moment's anxiety or regret. I was blindly attached, and I believed engaged, to a gentleman a few

years older than myself; when I say I believed myself engaged, I mean that afterwards, upon recalling to mind every word that had passed between us, I found reason to acquit him of being actually bound to me. However, I took it for granted, as the whole neighbourhood did, that we were solemnly engaged. I did not regret that I could not offer him, as I had once hoped to do, the fortune I meant to resign. I felt so much satisfaction in the idea of abandoning it for him, that I fancied he would feel equal pleasure in the sacrifice. I looked upon it as an earnest, which few people are so happy as to be enabled to offer before marriage, of the sincerity and depth of our love. I should have thought it the wildest injustice had I suspected that he would hesitate for a moment in his implied engagement to me. I knew his prospects would secure present comfort and future wealth whenever he should marry; and I tranquilly awaited his arrival as soon as he could with propriety present himself after my affliction. In the meantime he set sail for India, without a word to me of explanation or farewell. I assure you, Mr. Leonard, that though I can now speak of it so calmly, it cost me then more agony than I care to look back upon."

"But this was not my father?" exclaimed Leonard, shocked at the idea of such baseness, and for the moment overlooking the fact that Mr. Warrenne had never been to India.

"No; this was not the part that your father played in my earlier history," said Mrs. Digby, with a smile; "names in a narrative of this kind are but of secondary importance; yet when in your own concessions you touched slightly upon the manner in which Miss Reynolds had trifled with your feelings and misinterpreted your heart, I felt that it was not given to the daughter, any more than to the father, to comprehend the sacredness and the wealth of a true and deep affection."

Leonard looked all astonishment—although there was no reason why Mr. Reynolds should not have been the person referred to—and Miss Reynolds a worthy imitator of her father.

"It is natural, I suppose, for young people to form their opinion of the world at large from the little section that falls immediately under their eye," continued Mrs. Digby. "To me this incident embittered my feelings, and perverted my judgment. If he, whom I had invested with every perfection, whom I had enthroned above the angels, and worshipped as no mortal should be adored; if he could, for the loss of a little coin, perjure his inmost soul and break his unspoken vows, what must be the ordinary conduct of common men? What baseness, what pitiful treachery must direct their daily thoughts and acts! I shut myself up from every human being in silent disgust. I could hardly endure the needful presence of my servants. I transacted business by letter with the lawyer, who was on a visit at my house; and could only feel satisfaction at my wealth, inasmuch as it enabled me to carry out my plan of seclusion."

As Mrs. Digby spoke, for the first time during her history, with some warmth and animation, the kindling of her cheek and eye gave her back for the moment the bright and spiritual beauty of her youth.

"I had been acquainted with Mr. Warrenne during the lifetime of my father," continued Mrs. Digby; "and though my mind was too much pre-occupied to speculate on the object of his frequent visits, I had sometimes imagined that I was not indifferent to him. It was, I think, about six months after my father's death that I received a letter from him, in which he declared to me his long and devoted attachment, and offered to me with much respect and hesitation his hand. He had been withheld from making such a declaration for a length of time, under the idea that I was engaged. The departure of Mr. Reynolds had undeceived him in this respect. It did not occur to him that I could be forsaken; and he had eagerly awaited the close of the earliest interval that could elapse after my father's death, to lay before me his sentiments and solicit their return. He knew that if I married I should be penniless; and with a proud humility that pleased me, he touched on his ancient birth, his want of social position, his limited income, and the wealth he urged me to resign. He thought that to most women the affections of home were worth any sacrifice, and he knew that in my case I must purchase them by the surrender of my estate. In fact, he judged my heart as I had once hoped another would have judged and valued it. I am a bigot in behalf of the old blood, Mr. Leonard. I believe good sort of people may be found in every grade of life. I am not guilty of the impiety of supposing that Heaven is solely peopled with the descendants of the Normans and the Vikinger; but there is a high strain of feeling which alone belongs to such lordly descent. Every word of your father's letter breathed this strain."

Leonard coloured high with pleasure and emotion at this tribute to his father. Mrs. Digby went on:

"It may have occurred to you to meet with some trait of character, or perhaps only some written sentiment, which so wonderfully applied to the mood of your mind as to exercise a permanent and beneficent influence over your disposition. Such influence your father's letter had upon my feelings. I was at once lifted out of the deep despair which had followed my disappointment. The darkness around me seemed dispelled. There was yet faith, and love, and true nobility upon the earth. People may talk of the benefactors of their race; but those are the real benefactors who minister health and stability to a single human heart. It mattered nothing that I was unable to return his attachment. It mattered little that my peace and gladness of mind were inevitably destroyed. My trust in my fellow-creatures was gently restored; and I was visited by repose as soon as my natural grief was dispelled by time.

"It is singular," pursued Mrs. Digby, "that my father who left me

his estate upon such strict conditions, left me totally unfettered in my future disposal of it. Having no near relations, my thoughts often reverted to Mr. Warrenne as the worthiest person of my acquaintance, to make my heir. But he was some years older than myself, and the chances were that I might be the survivor. And as time slips away, I might have died intestate, if circumstances had not thrown you in my way, and decided my choice at once."

Leonard's astonishment almost took from him the power of utterance; he faltered something about his entire unworthiness to be so distinguished.

"With regard to our meeting on that terrible day," said Mrs. Digby, "although I should have ever felt grateful to you for your kindness, it would not alone have decided me on the step I am now taking; but you see that my principal reasons refer to affairs which took place before your birth and for which you are no way answerable; and let me tell you it is for my own contentment that I appoint an heir who has been brought up to my liking and who does no discredit to his bringing up.

"And now," she added, interrupting his deep-felt expressions of gratitude, "I must have my own way in certain particulars. It does not please me that my heir should derive his only advantages from my death; nor that he should step from a limited sphere of employment to the management of a large estate. I wish, therefore, that Mr. Warrenne should withdraw you from your present occupation, and send you to travel for two or three years. I should be glad that you spent some time in Italy and improve your taste in poetry and art. I have a horror of country squires! And now, Mr. Leonard, as I am not quite strong yet, I shall turn you out for to-day."

Leonard rode home bewildered by the change in his prospects, nor could he really believe his good fortune, until his father came from Mrs. Digby's deeply penetrated with her generosity; and informed him that she had taken legal measures to secure him her property, and had insisted on making him an allowance during her life, which would enable him with ease to carry out his plans of travelling when and where he pleased. She wished that her intentions with respect to Leonard should not be mentioned beyond his own family, not caring to have her affairs canvassed all over the county sooner than could be helped, and she suggested that Leonard should make his health the plea for withdrawing from Mr. Thomason's, and going to the South of Europe.

Of course, the consequence was that his daily visits to Forrel Court were set down to a sudden fancy on the part of Mrs. Digby to bestow her hand upon Leonard. The young man was pronounced a knave and a hypocrite, and the lady a very improper sort of woman.

(*To be continued.*)

"KENSINGTON MINOR."

By Gilbert H. Page.

THERE are a great many Kensingtons in London, and North Kensington might as reasonably be named North Trincomalee for any connection it has with either locality; but Kensington Minor lies still further afield, and is to be found wherever the Briton's happy countrymen—and countrywomen—mostly congregate.

No need to tell you in which particular land lies the Kensington Minor of the following sketch. All such places are precisely the same. There is nothing foreign or individual about any one of them. And but that we sojourn for the time in flats instead of houses, consume our fuel in stoves instead of open grates, and pay for our letters twopence halfpenny apiece, we might to all other intents and purposes have remained at home. For here we find the same society animated by the same ideals. The same Japanese fans and bits of drapery spot the walls, the same eternal photograph frames strew the side-tables, the same heterogeneous collection of worthless china encumbers the same brackets and shelves. Here, the same afternoon tea is poured out at the same hour, accompanied by the same floods of small talk.

"Doesn't the place remind you of my little drawing-room in Ledbury Road?" cried Mrs. Romer exultant, when I recently called upon her. Mrs. Romer, by the way, comes from Bayswater and brings a distinctly Bayswater atmosphere with her. On the last available inch of wall she has just nailed an orange-coloured palm-leaf, had planted in it an artificial strawberry plant with Brobdingnagian fruit, and hung from the handle thereof streamers of pink and green ribbon. (Kensington errs more æsthetically.) I agreed it did look remarkably like Ledbury Road, and reflected what an immense advantage it was that, though we had travelled hundreds of miles into foreign lands, nevertheless Kensington and Bayswater remained always with us.

Mrs. Romer has pitched her tent in Kensington Minor because the living is cheap. Milk only three halfpence a quart, she tells me; while a carriage with two horses may be had to any part of the town for the equivalent of sixpence. But she evinces an immense contempt for the dunderheaded individuals who ask her so little, and while she preys upon the land to her heart's desire, she satisfies her conscience by abuse of its Inhabitants.

"Beggarly" is Mrs. Romer's favourite expression, which she applies to every one outside the pale of Kensington Minor. The Duke, the Duchess, the Court, the Army; the people who put an

aristocratic prefix to their names and the people who don't; all are, in Mrs. Romer's opinion, a "beggarly set," their views "stupid!" and their pretensions and possessions "such rubbish!"

I ventured once to point out to Mrs. Romer, that if she didn't intrench herself quite so obstinately within the ramparts of Kensington Minor, if she mingled a little more with the outer Inhabitants, she might find occasion to modify her opinion. Among a population of over a hundred thousand it seemed difficult to believe that not one just man was to be found.

"Ignorance of a thing, or of a person," said I—and I was conscious, as I said it, there was more than a touch of "Old Morality" about the phrase—"will often lead us to dislike that which with a better knowledge we should find most congenial to us."

But Mrs. Romer frankly confessed she would sooner remain ignorant than run the risk of getting to like the horrid Inhabitants. She began to complain of their want of manners, and mentioned an incident where the national custom differs slightly from our own.

"Oh!" said I soothingly, "little outward forms of that sort vary with every country you go to. Fundamental good breeding, which means consideration for the feelings of others, is everywhere the same. In essentials, you wouldn't find the Inhabitants one whit inferior to ourselves. Indeed, I fancy we shock their sense of propriety quite as often as they shock ours. For instance, here it is an invariable custom to——"

But Mrs. Romer wasn't paying me the smallest attention. She had heard the door bell ring; it was her Tuesday "at home," and she was busy lighting up the spirit-lamp to boil the tea-kettle.

Of course every one in Kensington Minor has a day. So sacred an institution of the mother country could not be lightly discarded by her children. Mrs. Romer's little sitting-room began to fill. Mothers with their daughters, aunts with their nieces, unattached ladies no longer so very young extending over each other the wing of chaperonage; and what is not, thank Heaven, so usual at home, a posse of beardless youths—the crammer's men—who swarm in Kensington Minor. It is to be supposed that these young gentlemen condescend to do a little study of a morning; since every afternoon of the week they are to be found at the various "at homes" handing tea-cups, exchanging snobberies, and indulging in all that is most flat, stale, and unprofitable by way of conversation. For which inestimable benefits the British parent cheerfully pays a couple of hundred a year to some British bear-leader or coach.

I move my elbow slightly, and down rattle a dozen china poodles from the *étagère* behind me. The word I let out is fortunately covered by the entrance of two additional visitors. (Now I can tell you a story about these two ladies which is typical of Kensington Minor.) Mrs. Romer swims forward to greet them. "How d'ye do, my dear Mrs. Harting! *So* pleased to see you! Georgie, you are looking

blooming! Here is a place for you, but I don't think I need introduce you to Mr. Stanley?"

At which there are blushes, laughter, general hilarity; for wherever this young lady is expected, Mr. Stanley is sure to be found, and his wealth, his intentions, and poor Mrs. Harting's fond hopes, are constant themes for discourse.

I should be perhaps ashamed to record such gossip; but that the mind is subdued to what it works in. Here, there is no escape from one's environment, as in the larger Kensington at home. Here one is compelled to drink his allotted portion of futility daily; and one even finds a sad interest in recording the exact degree of mental deterioration that supervenes.

Therefore I will not apologise further for reporting what I hear. It is said that Mrs. Harting prays ardently that Georgie may find a husband, and may find him soon, for the yoke she lays on her mother's neck is no light one. Miss Harting is certainly very pretty; she is said to be very perverse and very extravagant too. There is no end to the number of her admirers or of her frocks, but as yet no one of the former has stepped forward to take upon his manly shoulders the payment of the latter.

But although Mrs. Harting is a pious woman, she is likewise a practical one. She believes in Providence, and she also believes in the wisdom of nations—proverbs. "Heaven helps her who helps herself" is often on her lips, and she leaves no stone unturned to secure unto herself a son-in-law.

It was Mrs. Romer's account of young Stanley which induced her to remove her migratory Lares and Penates from a neighbouring principality, and set them up in Kensington Minor. She and her daughter arrived at the railway-station, one spring day, with hope in their hearts and trunks full of dresses. Mrs. Romer met them. "My dear," she began, when she had an opportunity of speaking to Mrs. Harting aside, "he is such a charming young man! such nice manners! so well connected! speaks of his uncle General Stanley and of his aunt Lady Mary Muggins——"

"But are you sure he is well off?" asked Mrs. Harting dubiously. So many matrimonial swans having turned out, on nearer inspection, such very poor ganders indeed.

Mrs. Romer was positive. "Every one says so. He has the best rooms in the best hotel, rides or drives daily, wears a fur coat I positively covet, and shows in every way money is no object to him. But, my dear creature, quick! quick! there he goes now—there! there! on the other side of the street!"

Mrs. Romer was looking out of the window of the Hôtel d'Angleterre. Mrs. Harting rushed to join her. She was just in time to catch sight of two figures vanishing round the corner—a tall elegant young man walking arm-in-arm with a shorter, shabbier individual who leaned upon a stick.

"Dear young man!" cried Mrs. Romer, kissing her hand to the retreating backs, "I quite love you myself! Isn't he handsome? The other is his paid companion, secretary, or whatever he calls himself, Captain Grant."

"He is certainly good-looking," said Mrs. Harting. "I hope Georgie may think so; but she invariably takes up with the wrong man. It would draw tears of blood from a stone to see the way she goes on with detrimentals, while letting the best 'parties' slip through her fingers."

I may as well here explain how it is that I am able to describe scenes at which I was not present. It is not due to the licence of the story-teller. It is an actual fact that in Kensington Minor everything done or said becomes public property within four-and-twenty hours afterwards.

But I *was* present at the especially-arranged afternoon when young Stanley first made Miss Harting's acquaintance. He left no doubt on any of us of the impression she had produced. He never addressed a word to any one else. The other ladies were obliged to entertain themselves with me and with Stanley's paid companion, Captain Grant.

This gentleman was not particularly entertaining. Mrs. Romer tells me that people in these subordinate positions never are. But, as was remarked afterwards, he exhibited an affectionate respect for his young employer, which on the one hand compensated in some measure for his own deficiencies, and on the other was the best possible proof of Stanley's real worth. A man who is well spoken of by his valet is necessarily a man of merit.

"Such a charming young man!" cried the elder ladies in chorus, when he had gone. "So unassuming!" "Has so much to say for himself!" "Is so very good-looking!"

"He certainly wears the most magnificent diamond ring I ever saw!" cried Miss Georgie, with animation. At which Mrs. Harting smiled. She knew her child had all the admiration of the Red Indian squaw for bits of glittering glass. Stanley's fine diamond was a trump card on, or in, his hand.

It was not long before he and his diamond paid the Hartings a visit. He was accompanied by Captain Grant, whose presence proved rather a damper to the gaiety of the proceedings. For the Captain was a silent man, embarrassed, and awkward in demeanour, so that the first thing he did was to upset a tea-cup into his hat. Young Stanley was alert in coming to his aid, and while restoring things to order rattled on in so brilliant a fashion, that Mrs. Harting was in ecstasies over his gentle breeding and his gentle heart.

"And do you observe, Georgie," she asked that young lady, when their visitors had departed, "how Mr. Stanley appeals to Captain Grant on all occasions? This shows real delicacy of mind, and must greatly alleviate the disagreeables of the poor man's dependent

position. I wonder, by the way, what Mr. Stanley keeps him for? He can't be a very pleasant companion."

"I think he is much pleasanter than Mr. Stanley himself!" was the unexpected reply, which was just one of those speeches calculated to draw tears from stony places, and Mrs. Harting, being anything but stony, dissolved into quite a summer shower.

Kensington Minor noticed her red eyes, and spread the report that Miss Georgie had again been "throwing plates." Kensington Minor noticed also that Mr. Stanley kept the young lady constantly supplied with magnificent bouquets, that every afternoon he had some scheme for her amusement, and that at all our festive gatherings—we were constantly giving dances in Kensington Minor—he took care to secure for himself a lion's share of her waltzes.

Captain Grant used to come to these evenings too, and stand leaning against the wall looking on in silence. It was on one such occasion I heard young Stanley half apologise for his friend's presence.

"I dare say you think it odd, Miss Harting, that a man of his age should care to come out to dances, particularly as he is lame and can't dance himself. But I suppose it's dull for him when I'm out."

"I know it can never be dull for him when you are in!" said the little wretch with ready flattery. "Is he an old friend of yours?"

"Yes—er—that is to say, of my mater's."

"Your mother must be very glad to know you are with so steady and good a friend!"

"Oh, I like it myself!" answered the young man; "travelling is much better fun, too, than going about all by oneself."

"It is a great advantage for Captain Grant, of course?" She raised her eyebrows and voice interrogatively.

"The advantages are mutual!" replied the young man, with an amount of modesty that roused suspicion. "Grant is a thoroughly good fellow, and if he sometimes bores me with his strait-laced ways I'm sure I plague him much oftener with my wild ones. But I can make allowances, I hope!"

He certainly could make allowances. When, later in the evening, Captain Grant remarked in peremptory fashion he was going, and should be glad if Stanley would accompany him, the young man agreed with the utmost readiness.

Mrs. Romer was indignant, Mrs. Harting vexed, but Mr. Stanley with a smile and a shrug of the shoulders—a whisper to the one that poor Grant could not get along well without his arm, to the other that now all Miss Georgie's dances were gone, he no longer cared to stay, a murmured wonder to the young lady herself as to how he should live through the hours until he saw her again—departed, leaving behind him the (almost) unanimous opinion that his manners were as faultless as his heart.

In spite of the doubts he had expressed on the subject, young

Stanley fortunately did live through the night, and was thus enabled to renew his attentions on the next and on many succeeding days.

The future glowed with roseate hues for Miss Harting's mother, and all Miss Harting's friends congratulated her to her face and traduced her behind her back. Miss Harting herself, to keep up her character for perversity, occasionally snubbed her young, rich, and handsome swain, to act at, smile at, chatter at, his second-rate travelling companion.

The elder ladies were terrified by such imprudence, and Mrs. Romer volunteered to convey a hint to Mr. Stanley, that, in general, Captain Grant's absence would be preferable to his company.

The young man's tact, Mrs. Romer told me, was admirable. He said nothing at the time, but that her insinuations had borne fruit was soon evident. At an early date he casually let the ladies know that Grant was away on business, and then, as a happy thought, begged them to come the next day to a little dinner at his hotel. Would they honour him so far, he pleaded, adding it would be a real kindness to rescue him from the tedium of a long evening spent alone.

Mrs. Harting was enraptured, Miss Georgie not unwilling, and Mrs. Romer anticipated something quite out of the common in the way of a *menu*. "That dear young man had such exquisite taste." They dressed for the fray with more than ordinary care, and arrived at the hotel a few minutes before the hour.

My knowledge of what followed I owe to a very good friend of mine, who, however, filling for the moment the position of waiter at the Hôtel d'Angleterre, is not recognised in Kensington Minor.

All day long the rain had fallen heavily. The ladies told each other that the "dear young man" could not even have solaced himself with a walk. They glowed with satisfaction at the pleasure they were about to confer. But when they reached his *appartement* and were shown into a drawing-room redolent with flowers, they were a little surprised that their host was not there to receive them. And their surprise was increased when, through the curtains that shut off an inner room, they recognised his light tenor voice raised somewhat sharply as if in altercation. He spoke, and a deep bass growl replied. Its tones, too, were quite familiar to the listeners.

"What a shabby trick!" "So he never went, after all!" "Why, it's Captain Grant!" murmured the three ladies in a breath.

"Treated you badly, my dear fellow?" rolled out the bass voice behind the curtain; "I think I have allowed you considerable latitude. Some people would say you were treating me badly."

These strange words electrified the listening ladies. Being but frail daughters of Eve, they moved forward simultaneously, and, carefully holding their breath and their gowns, stretched three rose-coloured ears towards the dividing curtains.

The excited young Tenor began again. "Well, they are my friends, and they come to see me, and I think it deuced hard you should grudge me their society."

"It's a deuced deal harder you should grudge me my dinner, considering what it will cost me," replied the Bass.

"Go on!" cried the Tenor, vibrating with temper; "go on! You never let me forget my position, do you? You even count the cost of what I eat and drink. You take a mean advantage of my situation!"

"It is you," said the Bass, "who take a mean advantage of my good-nature, and my affection for your mother."

"My mother would be gratified, certainly, if she could see the way you treat me!"—this with lofty scorn.

"How do I treat you?"

"Abominably!"

"How abominably?"

The ladies behind the curtain strained their ears in agonised expectancy, but no answer came. One of the men now rose—Grant evidently, for when the bass voice spoke again it sounded much nearer at hand.

"I treat you abominably because I refuse to turn out of my own rooms on a wet night like this. The fact is, I have spoilt you. It's just my confounded laziness and love of a quiet life. But you are carrying things too far. 'Pon my word, I should not be surprised if the people here mistook me for your secretary instead of you for mine! Certainly, secretarial duties sit lightly on your shoulders! You are never to be found when wanted, nor can I depend on you for a single thing. This last fortnight I have had to write all my notes myself, and even so have been reduced to buying paper from the waiter, thanks to the liberality with which you help yourself to mine. Yesterday I received a bill for ten pounds from the florist, though personally I have not had ten shillings' worth of flowers since we came. But I have been presented also with a bill from your tailor, and here I kick. Over and above your salary—which I consider a liberal one—I will not pay for your coats. My friendship for your mother alone would forbid me to encourage you in such extravagant ways."

"You have said enough," cried the Tenor passionately; "I know you are my master and I your paid man, but you need not be for ever flinging it in my teeth."

There was a deep bass laugh. "Humbug! master and man forsooth! You, who help yourself to my things as if they were your own, and are positively wearing my very ring on your finger at this present moment."

"Do you think I want your beastly ring?" cried the Tenor, with a suspicious catch in it; then a window was thrown violently back, and the ring apparently flung out, for the bass voice laughed again.

"You are the most passionate fellow in the world, Stanley, and have evidently no idea of the value of diamonds. But I will return you good for evil, and as you are not at all fit to receive your friends just at present, I will go and receive them for you."

However, the listening ladies did not wait for this; gathering up

their skirts, they fled precipitately into the arms of my friend, the waiter, who, with professional gravity, escorted them out.

"To think how that miserable young man has imposed upon us!" cried the indignant Mrs. Romer.

"The ways of Providence are indeed inscrutable!" sighed Mrs. Harting.

"Well, I always told you Captain Grant was the better of the two," said Miss Georgie, her wandering preference suddenly fixed by the recent disclosures. Crossing the courtyard, she looked for and found the diamond sparkling among the rain-drops. She picked it up, and returned it that evening to the rightful owner, with, we may presume, a pretty little note.

The result of which note was of course a visit from Captain Grant next day. And what was the result of that visit? Well, for one thing, Mr. Stanley returned to his mother and penury in the wilds of Bayswater. So much is certain. And if I desired to flatter my lady readers, I should round the following sentences in good old style: "And the Captain secured a companion, amanuensis, and wife all in one, who did a great deal more for love than her talented young predecessor had ever done from a sense of duty; while Mrs. Harting found in the granting of her prayers (here I should score a bad pun) more than all the most exacting mother could desire."

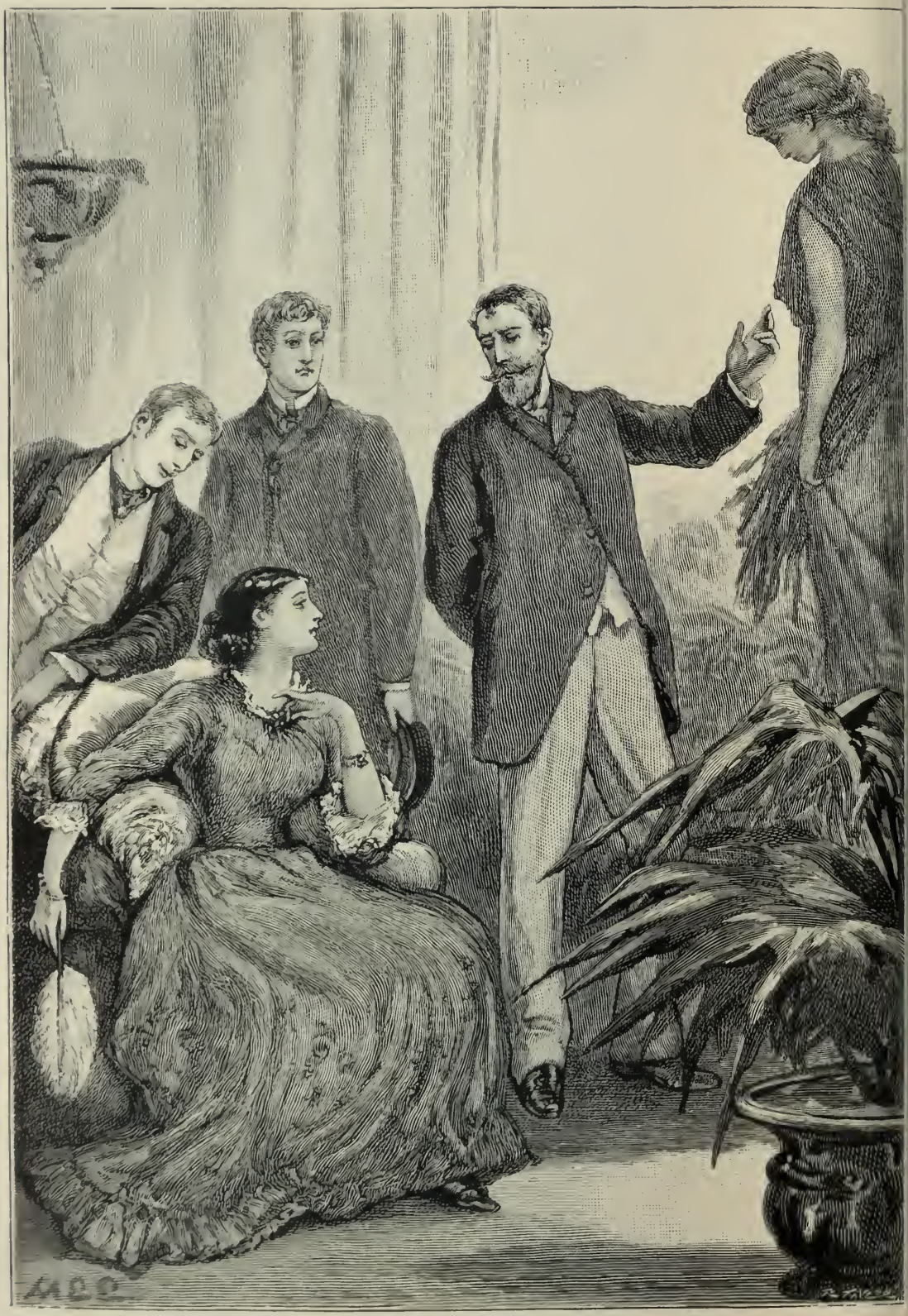
But long sojourn in Kensington Minor has not as yet entirely sapped my reverence for truth. I happened to be at the railway station when Captain Grant was leaving for—Trincomalee, shall we say? He had kept his intentions secret, and I only learned his departure and his destination at that moment from himself.

"I think," said he, in explanation, "a longer residence in Kensington Minor would be dangerous."

"Ah!" I answered warmly, for my mind was full of a case of typhoid I had just heard of in the west quarter; "you are quite right. The sanitary arrangements are a disgrace to civilisation. The English here should make up their minds as to what is wanted, and combine together to obtain it." Again the copy-book platitudes of "Old Morality" flashed across my mind. "Union is strength," I remarked sententiously.

Grant looked at me without speaking, but his slow smile broadening along his face set creases in his cheeks, and twinkled in the wrinkles about his eyes. It seemed to me to convey a vast variety of meanings not expressed in the simple phrases he presently uttered.

"It's not the sanitary so much as the social arrangements which I find dangerous," said he; "and though union is occasionally strength, I am afraid it is more frequently discord. Ah! we are off! Good-bye."



"WHY, IT IS YOURSELF!" EXCLAIMED SIR FREDERIC.

THE ARGOSY.

MAY, 1893.

MR. WARRENNE:

MEDICAL PRACTITIONER.

CHAPTER XVI.

AT THE OPERA.

ALTHOUGH the kindness of Mrs. Digby would at once have absolved Leonard from his duties at Mr. Thomason's, he sent in a qualified resignation; for he was anxious not to put to any inconvenience a gentleman who had received him when he needed employment. Perhaps he carried to greater lengths than most young men in his situation that fine sense of justice which the poet has recorded to be the best definition of *honour;* for he was satisfied to name no time for his withdrawing from his duties, but went on contentedly, week after week, until Mr. Thomason should select a suitable person to fill his place.

But with what altered feelings did he pursue his monotonous labours, and how patiently did he encounter the unnumbered vulgarities of his companions, while his mind reverted to the stately ruins of Rome, and the deep sunshine of the Greek Isles.

Mr. Mills welcomed him back with an oath, and heard the news of his resignation with equally strong expressions of discontent. He knew by experience that it would not be easy to find a clerk who would do so much more than his own share of work, and keep his temper into the bargain.

Mr. Courtenay's reception of him was very friendly; and the clerks could hardly restrain their astonishment at the sight of the musical gentleman condescending to talk familiarly to one of themselves. But Courtenay, who never seemed aware of the presence of his inferiors, went on addressing him exactly as if they had been alone.

"So now that you are quite well, you mean to leave us," he said.

"When you were so ill that you could hardly move there was no keeping you away from the place."

"I am going to Italy and Greece," said Leonard, who felt unable to explain the seeming inconsistency of his conduct, as Mrs. Digby had requested that her intentions might be kept secret.

"Ay! and afterwards?"

"I am not quite certain what will be my next step," said Leonard.

"Anybody left you a fortune, eh, Moonshine?" asked his companion.

"Not yet," said Leonard, smilingly.

"You are perhaps engaged to marry Miss Reynolds on your return?"

"Nor that," replied Leonard, growing more embarrassed as he saw how singular his proposed retirement must appear to any one unacquainted with his affairs.

"You need not look so guilty," said Courtenay; "but, indeed, I suppose you never happened to see her while you were at Erlsmede?"

"Never—except at church."

"Really; and how was she looking?"

"Just as usual," replied Leonard.

"Indescribable, I suppose," returned Courtenay. "She is in town now. Did you know that?"

"I heard so," replied Leonard.

"She is staying with a connection of mine, one Lady Jane Lockwood. O'Neill is at the house every day, making strong love."

Leonard sighed, and went on writing.

"Now's your time, Moonshine," said Courtenay, after a pause.

"For what?" asked Leonard, looking up.

"To cut out O'Neill."

"I wonder if it is possible to convince you that I never wish to see Miss Reynolds again?" said Leonard.

Mr. Courtenay's only reply to this remark was an incredulous smile; but he changed the discourse, and invited Leonard to accompany him to the theatre that evening. His aunt, Mrs. Thomason, had secured a box to see *Norma*, and he wished to introduce Leonard to his relations.

Leonard accepted this proposal with much pleasure; it so happened that he had never before visited one of the London theatres. He had always been too fatigued at the end of his day's duties to seek for any amusement beyond his own fireside; and the great alteration in his prospects had dissipated the morbid feeling of inferiority which would have made him scrupulously avoid the society of his equals.

Mr. Courtenay had promised to call for him, and he was punctual to the appointed time. They soon found themselves at the theatre, and

made their way to the stage-box which Mrs. Thomason had secured for her party. The box-keeper threw open the door; Courtenay stepped in first, and said to a lady in a spangled turban who occupied one of the chairs in front:

"Mrs. Thomason, allow me to introduce to you Mr. Leonard Warrenne."

Mrs. Thomason received him with much cordiality, asked if he came from the neighbourhood of Gloucester, evidently mistook him for somebody with whom she ought to be familiar, and made him take the chair behind hers, which she said "commanded a good view of the stage."

Leonard obeyed; and, being thus brought opposite to the young lady who occupied the other front seat, was enabled to observe a neck and arm of marble whiteness, and a large circlet of perfectly black hair. She was leaning forward, and looking through a lorgnette into the house. She now sank leisurely back into her chair, turned round to her cousin and smiled.

"Well, Charles, are you going to present Mr. Warrenne to me?" she asked.

Mr. Courtenay, who was standing behind her chair, drily named the parties to each other, held out his hand for her lorgnette, and then in his turn took a survey of the opposite boxes.

"He is not in the house, Charles," said Miss Thomason, as she resigned her glasses to her cousin.

"So I conclude," returned Mr. Courtenay. "He said he was coming, and therefore was pretty sure not to come."

"He must be a very strange man, that Sir Frederic Manning!" said Mrs. Thomason, arranging her gold chain.

"But I long so much to see him," said Miss Thomason.

"For that reason," remarked Mr. Courtenay, drily.

"Why not?" said Miss Thomason.

"Very natural," returned Mr. Courtenay, in the same tone; "but in the meantime you can ask Warrenne all about him; he comes from the same part of the country."

"Oh! I must ask you first a great deal about Mrs. Creswick, Mr. Warrenne," said Miss Thomason; "she is my godmother; and I have not seen her for such an age! How was she, when you left Erlsmede?"

"Erlsmede!" exclaimed Mrs. Thomason; "oh, dear, to be sure! it is Mr. Warton, whose family live near Gloucester, not Warrenne. I recollect!"

This being delivered in the form of a parenthesis, did not prevent Leonard from replying to Miss Thomason's question.

"I am happy to say that Mrs. Creswick is very well, for her," he replied; "but I did not see her during my recent visit to Erlsmede."

"So very singular," said Courtenay ironically.

Ada Thomason turned her eyes from her cousin to his friend without being able to understand this remark. Leonard took up the play-bill and pored over it, and Courtenay suddenly asked him "who played Oroveso," and smiled again when, in his confusion, he could not find the name.

The overture was just winding up; the footlights were rising; the clash of instruments was overpowering, and the blaze of the lamps streamed suddenly upon the audience. Mrs. Thomason unfurled her fan, and Ada drew up one of the shades. Courtenay leaned forward to help his cousin; and they neither of them observed the start with which Leonard rose from his chair.

Florence Reynolds at that moment entered the opposite box, accompanied by an elderly lady; and attended by a single gentleman.

She glided into the chair opposite the stage, laid her bouquet and handkerchief on the cushion before her, and, turning round to the gentleman who was learning on her chair, took her fan gracefully from him, and opened it to shade her eyes from the light. She was dressed in a perfect cloud of pale blue gauze, and her resplendent complexion, with the unusual profusion of her flaxen ringlets, gave her almost an ethereal appearance in the strong light to which she was exposed. Salutations had been exchanged between the inmates of the two boxes; and then, Leonard, who had been hidden behind Mrs. Thomason's turban, got up, and asked Courtenay who were the people opposite.

"Oh, don't you recollect Miss Reynolds?" asked Courtenay, turning, and giving a glance across the stage.

"Yes; but the others?"

"Lady Jane Lockwood, and Captain O'Neill; are there any more?"

"No; that is all," said Leonard, resuming his seat.

"A very heavy opera, don't you think, Mr. Warrenne?" said Ada Thomason, leaning back.

"I have never seen it," replied Leonard.

"Oh, I thought everybody had seen *Norma*," said Ada.

"Everybody but myself, I daresay," returned Leonard.

"Mdlle. Mohr plays it to-night, the *prima donna* is ill," said Ada.

"I thought she sang very well at our house last night," said Mrs. Thomason.

"She is improving," said Courtenay; "she took in good part my hint about her intonation."

"You are a bold man to criticise so admired a person," said Ada, smiling.

A burst of applause now proclaimed the entrance of *Norma*. She looked magnificent with her oaken garland, and her gesture of indolent command.

"There is something that I like so much in her eyes," said Ada, turning to Leonard.

"Yes; I agree with you—they are beautiful," replied Leonard, who was gazing intently into the opposite box.

Courtenay turned to him, and drily presented him with his lorgnette.

"You must find it rather fatiguing looking across those lamps," said he; "you had better take this, and I wish it was a telescope for your sake."

Leonard, colouring deeply, laid down the lorgnette, and tried to direct his attention to the stage.

The superb acting of *Norma*, which, to his English taste was more perfect than her singing, diverted him for a time from the opposite box. As she swept down the stage, she looked up, and exchanged a smile with Ada Thomason.

"Oh, Charles," said Ada, "do oblige me by going behind the scenes, and asking Mdlle. Mohr, when she comes off, to give me a few minutes between the acts. I have a thousand things to say to her."

"Well, I will ask her," said Mr. Courtenay; "but I hope she won't come. It is the ruin of all acting this mixing with the audience."

As soon as Mr. Courtenay was gone, Leonard felt able to bestow his attention more exclusively upon his opposite neighbours.

Captain O'Neill, seated behind Florence, was leaning upon her chair and whispering eagerly into her ear. Her colour seemed deepened; now and then she turned round with a soft gesture of reproach, and then, bending forward, addressed all her attention to the performance. Lady Jane looked restless and uncomfortable, and seemed to be watching her companions with some uneasiness. Leonard's curiosity was at its height, when Courtenay entered with Mdlle. Mohr on his arm. She was wrapped in a large shawl, kept at the back of the box, lest the audience should recognise her wreath; and after a few hurried sentences exchanged with Ada Thomason, she was conducted back again by Mr. Courtenay.

"I declare I don't know what I should do without Charles," said Ada, turning to Leonard.

"Nor I," said Mrs. Thomason; "his good-nature to you is unbounded; and really you do, sometimes, put it to a pretty strong test."

"It is so good for him to be teased occasionally," said Ada, in reply.

"I think Miss Reynolds looks bored with that man's conversation," said Mrs. Thomason, glancing in the opposite box.

"Who would not be?" returned Ada; "but Lady Jane seems to take it to heart more than Florence."

"I think he is making a declaration," said Mrs. Thomason.

"I am dying to know! I shall send Charles round as soon as he comes back," said Ada.

Leonard, trembling with anxiety, kept his eyes riveted upon Florence, and upon Captain O'Neill, whose manner became more agitated every moment.

"Well, Charles, was she in time?" asked Ada, as her cousin returned.

"Oh, yes! all this stuff is to last some time yet," said Mr. Courtenay, pointing to the stage, where the dim watch-fires were smouldering on the Druidical altars, and Adalgisa and Pollione were occupying the scene.

"Look at my bouquet, Mr. Warrenne, is it not splendid?" asked Ada; "I could hardly believe my senses when Charles brought it to me this morning—he is so little in the way of such gallantries—but judge of my mortification when he remarked, 'If you must needs throw your bouquet to Mdlle. Mohr, you may as well have a good one!'"

Leonard could not help laughing at this characteristic speech.

"Take care, Charles," said Mrs. Thomason, "I think you are losing your heart to this handsome Jewess!"

"What a susceptible heart I must have!" said Mr. Courtenay. "You accused me of a weakness for Fanny Palmer, when I put on her shawl the other day, and for both the Miss Northcotes, because I said they had good teeth."

"And I must say for Charles that Edla Mohr is not a Jewess!" exclaimed Ada.

"Well, she is a singer, at any rate," returned Mrs. Thomason.

This remark was incontrovertible, and the party turned their attention to the stage.

"How well she walks," said Courtenay, who was gazing at Norma through his glass; "see how steadily she carries her head; and what passion in her gestures! If she would but get out of that crying tone, she would be equal to Pasta."

"I wish you would say all these fine things to her, instead of finding fault with her as you do," said Ada. "But look, Charles, I want you to find out what your friend over there is about."

Captain O'Neill had all this time been increasing every moment in the impetuosity of his gestures. Florence, on the contrary, had grown colder and more distant. At last he appeared to lose all his self-command. He started from his chair, stamped on the ground with violence, and appeared to be giving way to a burst of indignant reproach. Florence shrank back, evidently frightened; and Lady Jane held up her hand as if deprecating his vehemence. He then turned abruptly from her, and rushed out of the box.

"I don't know—eh! Leonard," said Courtenay; "I think I will just go and see what it is all about. Lady Jane is using her salts as if she meant to be overcome. Take care of these ladies, my dear Moonshine, until I come back."

Mr. Courtenay soon made his appearance in the opposite box, addressed Lady Jane with his usual calmness, and received from her

what appeared to be a very animated explanation of the foregoing scene; Florence now and then turning half disdainfully towards him, and adding something to her friend's remarks.

After a few minutes' conversation, he shook hands with Lady Jane, and left the box without taking any further notice of Florence.

"I quite long to hear all about it," said Ada. "Charles will be back in a minute, and meantime we can listen to this beautiful duet."

The audience eagerly demanded an encore, and the attention of the party was entirely directed to the stage; but as soon as the encore and the applause that followed were over, Ada turned uneasily to Leonard.

"Where can Charles be?" she said; "did not you see him leave Lady Jane just before the duet?"

"Yes, I certainly did," replied Leonard.

"Why, then, mamma, where can he be!" exclaimed Ada, turning impatiently to her mother.

"Oh, my dear, I don't know; something has detained him—what a long act this is!" said Mrs. Thomason.

"I wish it was over," said Ada; "and then he *must* come back. He knows we don't stay the after-piece, because of Mrs. Hartley's ball."

"No; we must leave directly after the opera. I wonder whether Lady Jane has sent him anywhere?" said Mrs. Thomason.

"I think not; he took leave of her, as if he did not mean to come back—didn't it strike you so, Mr. Warrenne?"

Leonard had no ideas on the subject, but he thought it best to agree with Miss Thomason; and then, as the curtain slowly fell upon the senseless figure of *Norma*, as she lay shrouded in the funeral veil, Mrs. Thomason began to grow uneasy in her turn.

"It is very odd!" said she; "he never played us such a trick before. I declare, I'm quite angry with him!"

"I wish I *was* angry!" cried Ada, rising hastily, and sweeping down with her shawl the costly bouquet that was to have graced the triumph of Mdlle. Mohr. "Let us get out of all this clamour; for I can neither speak nor think here!"

"Take care of Ada, Mr. Warrenne; never mind me," said Mrs. Thomason, as Leonard offered that lady his arm on leaving the box.

"Our carriage will be waiting at the corner," said Ada. "Mamma would not have it draw up for worlds; she is so afraid of a crowd!"

"And you must really come home with us, and get some coffee," said Mrs. Thomason; "and then, perhaps, you may hear something of Charles."

Leonard cast one glance upon the stage as they were leaving the box. The curtain was held back at the opposite side, and the impatient audience were gratified by another sight of the singer. She

walked a few paces towards the lamps, stooped her head to the loud applause that burst forth on her re-appearance, and then retired with the grave and haughty demeanour that was habitual to her.

At the same instant Lady Jane Lockwood and Florence rose and left their box.

"I hope you were pleased with Mdlle. Mohr, Mr. Warrenne?" said Ada, as Leonard conducted her down the staircase.

Leonard expressed his admiration in due terms.

"I understand you are a musical family," continued Ada; "your sisters are beautiful singers?"

"Yes," Leonard replied; "they were all fond of music; he believed he might say that his youngest sister had a talent for it."

"And then she is blind," said Ada. "I long to know her; she must be so very interesting!"

Leonard, who had never heard his sisters called interesting before, could only say that he was sure they would derive much pleasure from becoming acquainted with Miss Thomason.

"I like Edla Mohr so much!" said Ada; "she bears such a high character—with scores of admirers—not a word has ever been said against her—and in society she is the most simple, obliging creature in the world!"

By this time they had reached the doors of the theatre, and Leonard, who was bending down and listening to his companion, had not before perceived that Lady Jane and Florence had joined Mrs. Thomason, and the former lady was pouring out her grievances to her friends.

"We never were in such a dilemma," said Lady Jane; "an unforeseen accident has deprived us of our cavalier, and I don't see a soul here that one knows to call up our carriage!"

"And what do you think of our fate, Lady Jane," said Ada, joining her mother at the moment, "who have lost our cavalier without any accident to account for it? I suppose you can give us no news of Charles?"

"No; I was just telling Mrs. Thomason I thought he had gone back to you! But you have two strings to your bow," and Lady Jane glanced at Leonard, who was standing a little behind.

"It is a pity we can't divide you—you are at a premium to-night, Mr. Warrenne," said Ada.

"Can I do anything for—Lady Jane?" asked Leonard, in a low voice, of Ada.

"This gentleman is very anxious to be of service to you," said Ada, turning gaily to Lady Jane.

"I am so much obliged—so sorry to trouble you," said that lady, coming forward; "if you would be so very good as to call my carriage—dark blue and gold liveries; I dare say it's not far off."

Leonard hastened out; and Florence, turning to Ada, said:

"Pray, how long may you have known Mr. Leonard Warrenne?"

"This is our first interview; but I like him so much!" said Ada; "he has such a mournful, *Stuart* sort of look. He'll die early, I dare say."

"My dear, you should not allow yourself to imagine such things," said Mrs. Thomason. "I have no doubt the young gentleman will live as long as his neighbours."

Leonard now returned with the news that her ladyship's carriage had drawn up, and handed Lady Jane across the portico into it. Florence followed; and as he offered her his hand, in turn, to mount the steps, she said, in a tone that meant to be playful, but that faltered, in spite of herself:

"I presume I have not the honour to be recollected by Mr. Leonard Warrenne?"

"It is impossible that Miss Reynolds can be forgotten by any one," replied Leonard gravely; and having seen Lady Jane off, he went back to the Thomasons, and escorted them to their carriage.

"All this time I am very anxious about Charles," said Ada. "I hope we shall find him quietly established in the drawing-room when we get home; though how to account for his absence, I cannot think!"

Mrs. Thomason, who was growing sleepy, did not seem to interest herself about the matter; she reclined in her corner of the carriage, and only roused herself to express some doubt that crossed her mind whether "that tiresome Celestine had sent home her dress hat."

The moment the carriage stopped, before even the steps were let down, Ada leaned out, and desired to know whether Mr. Courtenay had come in.

"No; the servant had not seen him."

She hurried upstairs into the drawing-room; while Mrs. Thomason, leaning on Leonard's arm, made a slower ascent, as became her size. Ada was looking over the few cards and notes, which she had seized from the table, in the hope that there might be among them some message from Mr. Courtenay.

"No, there is nothing here," she said, as they entered, turning on them her face, perfectly blanched by fear. "What can I think? Good Heaven! Mr. Warrenne, he can't have fought that man!"

"Quite impossible at this time of night," said Leonard, smiling. "Besides, I don't clearly know what they should quarrel about."

"Oh, perhaps he was insolent to Lady Jane. Those officers are often very ill-mannered where they can get nothing from you, and Lady Jane is a connection of my cousin's, you know."

Mrs. Thomason, who was waking up by degrees as she stirred and sipped her coffee, now looked towards her daughter.

"Don't you mean to put something into your hair for the ball, my dear?" she asked.

"Oh, goodness, mamma! I can't go to Mrs. Hartley's unless we hear or see something of Charles first!" said Ada. "I am frightened to death? What can we do, Mr. Warrenne?"

"I wish heartily that I could relieve your anxiety," said Leonard "If you had any idea where to send me in search of him—"

"Dear me, Ada, what nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Thomason. "Nothing can have happened, can it, Mr. Warrenne? Young men will be young men. Charles has met some friend who has asked him to supper, or to some party that he did not care to miss; don't you think so, Mr. Warrenne?"

Her appealing to Leonard plainly proved how little weight she attached to her own explanation: but still she took another cup of coffee and a brioche, and seemed to enjoy them.

"You know him better," said Ada, fixing her earnest eyes upon Leonard; "he does nothing like other people—like *young men!*" she added with a touch of peevishness, as she pushed her coffee-cup from her.

"Pray do stay, Mr. Warrenne," said Mrs. Thomason. "I hope every moment to see Charles; and really, Mr. Thomason being in Cornwall, I should feel quite lonely if anything did occur."

It seemed to be Leonard's particular fate to become the protector of ladies. He had no great ambition to sit up all night; but he acquiesced very courteously, and they all drew their chairs into a circle round the blazing fire, looking very comfortable, and feeling as much the reverse as it is possible to imagine.

"There's a carriage! No, but he would walk; he walks a great deal," said Ada; "and he had not his cab this evening. He can never mean to leave us in this suspense till to-morrow."

"Half-past eleven," said Mrs. Thomason, as the time-piece on the side-table chimed the half-hour.

"I think you are rather fast," said Leonard, looking at his watch.

"What are you, Mr. Warrenne?" asked Ada, eagerly.

"Only a quarter after," said Leonard.

"I am sure it is very kind of you, Mr. Warrenne, to wait so long; is it not, mamma?" said Ada.

"Yes, my dear, very kind; and I hardly know how to express to Mr. Warrenne how much obliged I feel; and I do wish you would let me ring for some wine and water for you"—(two bows from Leonard, and a negative put upon the wine and water); "but, my dear, I am quite distressed about this ball. Mrs. Hartley made such a point of our going."

"I can't help it, mamma," said Ada, in a desponding tone; "I only know I cannot go."

"I do wish you would," said Mrs. Thomason. "Now don't you think, Mr. Warrenne, that if she only took a little *sal volatile*, and made the exertion, she would be all the better for it?—and then, at breakfast, she would most likely find her cousin, as usual!"

It just trembled on the borders of Leonard's mind, that Mrs Thomason, with her diamond spray on her bosom, and her ermine rug beneath her feet, was rather a vulgar woman; but, of course, he

had only to say that if Miss Thomason could make up her mind to go to the ball, the time would probably appear less long than if she sat up waiting at home.

Ada shook her head, and sank again into silence; and then, Leonard, having nothing on earth to do but to look at her, became aware for the first time that she was singularly handsome, both in face and person. She was perfectly white—a pure, warm white, which leaves nothing of colour to be desired. Her eyes and hair were of that violet black so frequently celebrated in the lyrical poetry of the Greeks. She was small, beautifully rounded, and as indolent as a Georgian. It was only such a fright as her present suspense that could rouse her from her languid ease. Her broad, low forehead, her calm, still eyes, and even the rounded arms and taper fingers that fell so sleepily by her sides, seemed formed to express the perfect repose of her disposition.

Meanwhile, conversation flagged. Mrs. Thomason began to nod, Ada sat watching the timepiece, and Leonard was arguing with himself whether it would be possible to propose his going home, when the noiseless door opened, and Courtenay walked into the room.

"I hope you did not wait for me," he said, going quietly up to his aunt. "I knew I left you in good hands; and I was summoned on a little business for a friend, which could not be put off."

This address partially awoke Mrs. Thomason from her slumbers. She began giving an incoherent account of how much she had been alarmed, and how she had tried to persuade Ada to put something in her hair and go to Mrs. Hartley's ball. Meantime, Ada, who had drawn nearer to her cousin while her mother was speaking, and had kept her eyes earnestly fixed on his countenance, now took alarm at the rigid stillness of his aspect.

"He is going to fight!" she exclaimed, with a burst of tears. "I am sure of it, mamma! Look at his face—how guilty!"

"Really, this is very foolish!" said Courtenay, leading her back to her chair; "who would you have me fight, in Heaven's name? And crying, too! Did you ever know a case in which crying mended matters? Let me get you a glass of water."

"No; but that man," said Ada, holding back her cousin, "there was something between him and Miss Reynolds, and you resented it; why, I see you are as pale as death!"

"You are a child," said Courtenay, gravely, after a pause, during which he seemed to grow even paler than before. "O'Neill left Miss Reynolds this evening exasperated by her decided rejection of his proposal. I knew he believed himself certain of success, and that he looked to this marriage as the only means of repairing his fortunes. I went down to his hotel with the intention of offering him any assistance in my power; but I was too late—he had shot himself five minutes before I arrived."

A deep silence followed this terrible announcement, which was first broken by Leonard, who, murmuring some attempt at a farewell to the ladies, hurried out of the room, and into the air.

CHAPTER XVII.

SIR FREDERIC.

LEONARD did not see Mr. Courtenay for several days. Indeed, from the interval that elapsed, he concluded that he secluded himself until after the funeral of his friend. Although he must have been perfectly unable to respect any one point in Captain O'Neill's character, he entertained that sort of regard for him which is frequently met with in people who have known each other from children. A liking cemented by habit; and as little proportioned to the exact merit of the individual, as the interest felt for a relative. Leonard felt the event as deeply as Mr. Courtenay; but he bestowed upon the caprice and treachery of Miss Reynolds those regrets which the other felt for the awful death of the disappointed suitor.

"There's an invitation from Mrs. Thomason," said Courtenay, one day, laying a printed paper upon Leonard's desk.

"To a ball," said Leonard, hesitating.

"Yes; you had better begin to talk about your station. Do; I advise you."

"My station does not annoy me as it did," said Leonard, smiling.

"That's well. You *must* go. I told Ada I would bring you; she is so grateful to you for staying with them that night."

"Miss Thomason overrates my services," said Leonard. "I really did nothing."

"And you will meet your idol, Miss Reynolds, too," said Courtenay. "I understand she is coming."

"I don't know why you associate me always with Miss Reynolds," said Leonard. "I have no interest in her; and I confess, now, I should be pained to meet her."

"What is the meaning of *now?*" asked Courtenay.

"Since the death of Captain O'Neill," returned Leonard.

"Oh! I thought you had got some moonshine notion of that sort into your head," said Courtenay. "Well, I should not at all wonder if I were to marry her some day myself—so I give you fair warning, if you have a mind to cut me out."

"Good Heaven! but you make a jest of everything!"

"I am not jesting, on my word; my friends bore me to marry, and it is a matter of perfect indifference to me who the lady is, so long as she is not absolutely disagreeable. *Filer le parfait amour*, is not at all to my taste."

Leonard was silenced as usual by the expression of sentiments so different from his own. He hardly knew if Mr. Courtenay was in

earnest; but supposing he was, in such matters he had surely a right to his own opinions.

Courtenay insisted on calling for Leonard, and driving him to Mrs. Thomason's; it was so much out of his way that Leonard was unwilling to accept his offer, and opposed it by a variety of arguments. But Mr. Courtenay never discussed his plans. He simply said, "I shall call for you;" and was as good as his word.

As soon as they entered the ball-room, Ada Thomason, who almost seemed as if she had been on the watch for their arrival, came forward to greet them. She was in high beauty; her raven hair gathered low behind, and woven into a large coronet that completely encircled her head, intermixed with a wreath of velvet oak-leaves.

She received Leonard with much courtesy, and then turned to her cousin.

"Well, Charles," she said, laying her hand on his arm, "I have been wanting you already."

"I don't doubt it," he replied. "What's the matter?"

"Do you know," she said, "it is very unfortunate; but everybody does so shun Miss Reynolds, it is quite marked. I have asked several persons to dance with her, but they all excuse themselves. They said," added Miss Thomason, lowering her voice to a whisper, "that she *murdered* Captain O'Neill!"

"Excessively like 'everybody,' to say anything so absurd," remarked Courtenay, drily. "I'll dance with her presently, if you like it."

"Oh! thank you, Charles," returned Ada, "I hoped you would. Poor thing, I do so pity her!"

"Take my advice," said Courtenay; "it is the fashion of the day to be so very Christian—to pity, rather than blame any one who behaves in a rascally manner. Pity all the *good* people who are in trouble, *first*, my dear Ada; and then if you have any left (which I doubt) you can begin to pity the bad. And here is Warrenne dying to engage you for this waltz; unless indeed," he added to Leonard, "you would prefer to take a turn with Miss Reynolds instead, in which case I will do my best for you."

But Leonard drew back hastily, and lost no time in securing the hand of Miss Thomason for the waltz. Mr. Courtenay went into the next room to speak to some of his acquaintances, and Ada proposed to wait a little before they joined the waltzers, as the circle was very crowded. In moving up the room to look for a seat Leonard found himself close to Miss Reynolds. She was paler than usual, and seemed harassed and out of spirits. Leonard merely bowed to her, and made no attempt to speak. Perhaps she expected that he would have asked her to dance, which would then have been a welcome invitation, for this was the first time in her life in which she found herself sitting neglected in a ball-room. She was partly indignant, but more alarmed, by the view people seemed to take of her conduct. She well knew that, but for the suicide of Captain O'Neill, she might

have gone on coquetting as long as her beauty (or more properly speaking, her money) lasted; but she saw that people who always judge of results, not of motives, ascribed to her a catastrophe which might more correctly be attributed to his own foolish and ungoverned temper. The idea of incurring the neglect that is very properly evinced towards women who have neither beauty or fortune, filled her with terror. She raised her eyes imploringly towards Leonard, but he did not observe her glance. He was talking earnestly with Ada Thomason.

"I believe we must be thankful for standing-room, Miss Thomason," said he; "there seems no chance of a seat."

"Never mind, we shall be off in a minute. This is rather a different meeting from our last," she added, looking archly up at Leonard.

"It is indeed," said he; "if I had been Courtenay, how flattered I should have felt at your anxiety."

"Instead of which he took it quite as a matter of course," replied Ada, laughing. "But the fact is, that having no brother, he has supplied the place of one to me for a good many years. I never was so miserable! Now, what did *you* think had happened?"

"I was quite at a loss to know," replied Leonard; "but he is so well able to take care of himself that I did not for a moment suppose he had got into any mischief."

Florence meantime remained watching Leonard with the greatest anxiety. She was surprised and in her heart deeply gratified at meeting him in such society. Often, in the days of their early acquaintance, she had argued herself into the belief that it was impossible she could love one so much beneath her in his worldly position. But now, caressed by the Thomasons, and intimate with the fastidious Courtenay, she felt that the gulf between them was over-stepped; the barrier that now existed was of his own raising—it was evident that he no longer wished to excite her interest. At another time this might have given her but little uneasiness, but now, depressed and neglected, she felt the loss of his regard with a keenness that cannot be expressed.

Leonard and Ada were now mingled with the dancers, and she followed their rapid movements with her weary eyes until they disappeared from the circle. Leonard conducted Miss Thomason to the refreshment room after the waltz, where Mr. Courtenay was standing talking to some of his acquaintances. Ada took a seat near her cousin, and Leonard brought her some ice.

Mr. Osborne, who was eating sugar-plums at the table, came up to her, and engaged her for the next dance.

"How dweadfully shocked I was at O'Neill's death!" said he. "It weally is too howwible. Courtenay was thewe diwectly after the event, he tells me."

"Yes. Don't talk of it; I can't bear to hear it mentioned," said Ada.

"But it weally was such an extwaordinary proceeding," persisted Mr. Osborne. "If I was wefused, I would never shoot myself—would you, Courtenay?"

"Decidedly not," said Courtenay. "But I should like any one to try the same game with me that she did with O'Neill; they would not find it answer."

"Why, you could not help being wefused," said Mr. Osborne.

"Could not I?" returned Courtenay drily.

"Give me your recipe, then, will you?" said a gentleman who was standing near. "I may find it of use some day."

"I did not know you were here," said Courtenay, shaking hands with the speaker.

"Only just come to town," replied the gentleman. "I say, is not that a son of Mr. Warrenne, of Erlsmede?"

"Yes. Sir Frederic Manning—Mr. Leonard Warrenne."

"I thought so," said Sir Frederic, coming up to Leonard, and shaking hands with him. "Your father is a very old friend of mine; I ought to know you."

Sir Frederic had been a sailor in his early youth; he had a deep scar across his forehead, picked up at Navarino. A thousand extravagances were told of his career afterwards, some of which were true, and some, of course, utterly without foundation. He had been a great traveller, exposed to a great many dangers, and involved, report says, in a great many adventures. Nothing could exceed the frankness of his manners and language, partly owing to his early habits, but more because he cared not one straw what people said or thought of him.

"But, I say, this is really a dreadful story. Is it true?" asked Sir Frederic.

"True? I should think so," replied Mr. Courtenay; "there's no mistake when a man blows his brains out."

"I don't know; people said I shot myself when I was at Cadiz," returned Sir Frederic. "But, I say, Courtenay, I had a narrow escape of her. You know she refused me; everybody knows it—she spread it all over the county—so it is of no use for me to make a secret of it."

And Sir Frederic burst into a hearty laugh that seemed as if his heart had not suffered greatly in the conflict.

"I met her at a ball," continued Sir Frederic, "thought her very handsome—don't you? As soon as I could find time, I made her an offer. Well, it is a fact that she fancied I was after her fortune. I was rather hard-up just then, it is true, but it would be beyond me to marry a woman for her money. I'll never make up to an heiress again—never, if there's not another handsome woman left in the world! She laughed in my face, confound her—she did, on my word! But it is abominable, her treatment of O'Neill, because the poor fellow made so sure of her."

"I don't see that it is a jot more abominable than her treatment of half a dozen others. Because the man chances to destroy himself, people lay the blame on her," returned Courtenay. "She had nothing on earth to do with it, in my opinion."

"Ah, you are a philosopher!" replied Sir Frederic, taking up a biscuit, and eating it with great composure as he spoke. "But *à propos*, find me a partner—will you? A woman without a sixpence, of course, and I shall be much obliged to you. You know everybody here, I suppose, and I never saw a soul of them before."

"As soon as you like," returned Courtenay, looking round the room. "I don't know, I declare, whether Miss Lee has any money; I'll ask her."

Leonard looked all amazement as Mr. Courtenay crossed over to Miss Lee, a tall, animated girl, who was talking and laughing with two or three young men.

"Miss Lee, I have a particular reason for asking whether you have a large fortune?" said Courtenay.

"Not a groat. Go along with you, and try somewhere else!" she replied, laughing.

"On the contrary, I must beg that you will let me choose you a partner for this polka."

"Well, you are a good soul; you think I want one all the more for my poverty. Quite sorry, but I am engaged three deep."

"Charles!" exclaimed Ada, as he passed her.

Mr. Courtenay paused.

"Engage me to Sir Frederic."

"Oh, no, that won't do!"

"But it must do."

"Impossible; he has a prejudice."

"Against *me?*"

Mr. Courtenay made a sign of assent, and passed on.

"What's the matter? Won't she do?" asked Sir Frederic, who was looking indifferently on.

"Engaged—that's all," replied Mr. Courtenay.

"Who's that pretty little dark thing talking to Warrenne?"

"Oh, she won't do—a millionaire!"

"She's very pretty, though," said Sir Frederic, gazing attentively at Ada.

"Let me introduce you to Miss Palmer," said Courtenay, touching Sir Frederic, to recall his attention from Miss Thomason.

Sir Frederic exchanged bows with the young lady, was engaged to her for the next dance, and then, without taking any further notice of her, rose suddenly, and went up to Leonard.

"I say, Warrenne, how is young Scudamore getting on?" he asked.

"Pretty well, I believe—not very fast," returned Leonard.

"Do you think he will ever get over that injury?" asked Sir Frederic.

"My father says he will, if he takes the commonest care of himself," replied Leonard.

"Now, Miss Thomason, may I have the pleasuwe?" said Mr. Osborne, as the strains of a polka echoed from the ball-room.

"I told you the next quadrille, Mr. Osborne," said Ada hastily. "I don't mean to dance this polka; the ball-room is so warm."

"Oh, I declawe I mistook! I thought you said the polka," replied Mr. Osborne.

"No, the next quadrille," said Ada, colouring.

Mr. Osborne went to seek another partner, and Ada remained seated in the refreshment-room, with Leonard leaning on the back of her chair, and Sir Frederic talking to him.

"I like him exceedingly," continued Sir Frederic. "You know he gained great credit leading that storming party; and then there was a sortie he made with a handful of Sepoys from a fortress somewhere in the north. Have you read Pulci?'

"I have looked at him," said Leonard; "I am but a poor Italian scholar."

"Well, his way of describing anything reminds me of one of Pulci's knights. There's an absolute simplicity in all he says that is delightful. Fine times those, Mr. Warrenne."

"Very fine," replied Leonard.

"But you ought to get up Italian, if you mean to travel," said Sir Frederic. "It is indispensable in the Mediterranean, the Greek Isles."

"I thought French would carry me through," said Leonard.

"Not everywhere," said Sir Frederic; then coming closer to Leonard, he gave him a push, with an expressive glance towards Ada, and added, "make her talk!"

Leonard opened his large grey eyes so very wide at this modest request, that Sir Frederic was seized with a violent fit of laughter, in the midst of which he stopped short, with a look of dismay. "I say," he exclaimed, "is that polka over?"

"Yes," replied Leonard.

"Bless me, I was to have danced with some one—I forgot all about it; where's my partner? I suppose the next dance will do as well."

"What was the lady's name?" asked Leonard.

"That I don't know; she had a pearl net on her head. Oh, well, it does not signify. If you happen to see her, make some excuse for me," said Sir Frederic; and he walked off to the card-room.

Mr. Courtenay, in the meantime, had gone in search of Miss Reynolds, who, tired of remaining a mere spectator of the dance, had gone into the card-room, and was standing beside Lady Jane Lockwood.

"Are you not dancing, my dear?" asked Lady Jane.

"No, I don't think I shall dance to-night," said Florence languidly, drawing a chair towards the table.

"Well, Miss Reynolds," said Courtenay approaching her, "how did you leave all at Erlsmede?"

"All quite well, and as dull as usual," returned Florence.

"I can hardly fancy Mrs. Creswick dull, or the Warrennes either," said Courtenay.

"I know nothing about the Warrennes," said Florence; "except that Mr. Leonard is going to be married to a rich old woman in the neighbourhood."

"I hope not," said Courtenay with his peculiar ironical smile, "because I have a rich *young* woman in my eye for him."

"Mr. Courtenay a match-maker!" said Florence, disdainfully.

"Yes, sometimes; shall I exert my talents in your behalf? I could find you a *parti* who should be your *match* in every sense, Miss Reynolds," said Courtenay, pointedly.

"Thank you, Mr. Courtenay, when my case becomes very desperate, I may apply to you," said Florence, with animation.

She felt a good deal flattered by his notice, because she had hitherto found it impossible to obtain it. If she could bring *him* to her feet, with all his coldness, it would be the greatest triumph she had ever achieved.

"Well, now, shall we dance this next quadrille together?" said Courtenay carelessly.

"With pleasure," said Miss Reynolds, rising at once; "I believe I have never danced with you before, Mr. Courtenay."

"Have you not?" replied Courtenay, leading her into the ball-room; "which set shall we join—this one? Leonard, are you consoling Fanny Palmer for Sir Frederic's desertion? Come and be our *vis-à-vis*, will you?"

Leonard obeyed his friend; and Courtenay, seeing that Miss Reynolds looked rather confused, said to her:

"You should always contrive to secure a victim for a *vis-à-vis*, it makes the thing more piquant; you see how careful I am of your interests."

"Oh, Mr. Courtenay," said Florence, blushing and smiling; "you grow quite scandalous! besides, you really over-rate my power."

Courtenay bestowed upon her a scrutinizing look which she could not exactly comprehend: she only felt that he would be a very difficult person to subdue.

"And when do you go back to Erlsmede?" asked Courtenay.

"Oh, as soon as papa arrives in England," said Florence; "we are expecting a letter to announce him every mail."

"How impatient you must be!" said Courtenay, drily.

"Oh, yes! Of course papa will have a house in town, he will never think of burying himself in the country; and I shall be able to do

just as I please then. I flatter myself there will be none of the monotony of Erlsmede in my establishment."

Courtenay smiled.

"What makes you smile? Do you suppose papa will not let me have my own way in everything?"

"I know I would not," said he very quietly.

"Why, Mr. Courtenay, you must be an absolute monster!"

"I have no doubt you would think me so," he replied coolly.

"I don't believe a word you say!" exclaimed Florence, prettily. "I am sure you could never refuse anything to a person whom you loved."

"Ah! I believe you are right there," replied Courtenay.

Florence misunderstood him. Her eyes sparkled with gratified vanity.

"See! I knew you were only jesting," she exclaimed; "you are one of those tiresome persons who make themselves out worse than they really are. Lady Jane is going, I see; I declare I am half sorry—no, I will not give you the trouble of looking for my shawl; you think it a trouble, don't you?"

"Certainly," replied Courtenay.

"I don't know what to do with you, Mr. Courtenay; you are quite a character, I see. Now, I must trouble you to hold my bouquet for a moment, while I tie my hood. Shall we see you at Lady Jane's on Wednesday?"

"I really don't know so long before," replied Courtenay; "perhaps I shall look in."

"Oh, do come! Miss Lockwood will be there; she is so pretty! And as you profess yourself a match-maker, you may bring any one that you think would suit her!"

"Well, I must step in to see Miss Lockwood," replied Courtenay. "Take my arm, your carriage is up."

Florence drove off half piqued, half pleased. Strange and cold as he was, she had attracted him for half the evening. She had done more than she ever expected to accomplish; and if he had a heart, hard as it was, it was well worth breaking.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SYRENS.

A FEW days after the ball, Leonard was informed that Mr. Thomason had supplied his place, and that he was at liberty to withdraw from his service. He did not receive this intelligence with all the joy that he had once believed it would excite. Although he would not have confessed as much to himself, he felt a reluctance to leave the country while so much uncertainty attended the fate of Miss Reynolds. He had heard from Courtenay that the other suitors, who had retired

during the apparent favour of Captain O'Neill, were now beginning to return to their allegiance; and he almost wished that he could put off his departure until she should have decided for or against some one of them.

"Thinking of Miss Reynolds, eh?" asked Courtenay, as they were going together to make a call on Mrs. Thomason, previous to Leonard's leaving town.

"I did happen to be thinking of her, or rather of her suitors," said Leonard, boldly.

"And what is the result of your meditations?"

"I was merely speculating on their chance of success," replied Leonard.

"Is that all, Moonshine? Then set your mind at rest; don't trouble yourself to call them out, it would be a mere waste of powder. By the time you return to England it is very probable your fair enemy will be Mrs. Courtenay."

"I cannot believe you," replied Leonard; "I am sure you must despise Miss Reynolds."

"No, I don't," replied Mr. Courtenay. "At least, not so much as you would think. She is a coquette—well, that is a habit she will leave off when she becomes my wife. And, let me tell you, I don't think the worse of her attractions when I see that such a philosopher as yourself finds it altogether impossible to forget her."

"I never denied her attractions," said Leonard. "I think her a syren."

"No, stop, my dear Moonshine!" said Mr. Courtenay. "Don't be hard on her vocal powers. A syren! That's too satirical, when *you know* she cannot sing a single bar in tune! I'm afraid I must get her to leave off music when matters are a little more forward."

Leonard, finding that his friend was not disposed to be serious, dropped the subject, and they went on in silence to Mrs. Thomason's.

It was a splendid house. The broad staircase was fragrant with flowers, and as they mounted the stairs, they heard the sound of the piano, mingled with a full, rich, soprano voice.

"Hark!" said Courtenay, "do you know the singer?"

"It is Mdlle. Mohr," said Leonard.

"Right as my glove," said Courtenay. "We will go in here, and so escape the *levée* in the drawing-room."

The door he opened took them at once into the inner drawing-room, the folding doors of which were half-closed; a bow window at the end was quite filled with plants and creepers, in the midst of which stood a beautiful statue of Ada, in the character of Ruth gleaning. The original of this statue was reclining in the lowest possible easy-chair, just opposite to the piano where sat Mdlle. Mohr, in the act of concluding one of those delightful German story ballads which are so common in their music. She finished with perfect composure, and then, rising and putting on her little velvet bonnet which she

had laid beside her while she sang, she advanced to receive his greeting.

"Mr. Courtenay is quite welcome to the little moral at the end of my ballad, which is all he heard of it," she said, in reply to his thanks. "I do not know if it is necessary to warn him against mermaids—"

"And syrens," added Courtenay, looking at Leonard. "But I don't like to see you put on your black cap, because I am afraid it is a sign you mean to give us no more singing."

"My black cap," said the singer, taking off her bonnet and looking at it. "It is the very prettiest bonnet in all London. Ask your cousin!"

"I chose it," said Ada.

"She said I was to make so many conquests in it," continued Mdlle. Mohr; "and since I have bought it, I have conquered nothing, except one mad, strange person, who came to see me—what is his name, then, Miss Thomason?"

"Sir Frederic Manning," said Ada.

"He wanted me to teach him singing," pursued the German; "and all his voice was like this," and Mdlle. Mohr, with the *naiveté* and readiness of imitation so often seen in foreigners, made some sounds like a person choking. "There, no more voice than you have," she added, turning to Courtenay.

"Come, let me hold your bonnet, and go back to the piano," said Courtenay. "If you can say nothing pleasanter than that, you had better sing."

"Well, ask your cousin to take a second, and we will sing you a duet," said Mdlle. Mohr.

"No, don't, Charles," said Ada. "Mdlle. Mohr was going to sing me the 'Erl-King.' And I have not sung for an age; my voice is out of order."

"And that is the end of the hundreds that have found their way into the pockets of those Italian fellows," said Mr. Courtenay. "Upon my word, it's a shocking waste of money. You had better have given it to an hospital."

"Now, don't moralise, Charles," said Ada; "take Mdlle. Mohr to the piano, and sit down somewhere, out of my way."

Mr. Courtenay obeyed his cousin, and Mdlle. Mohr had hardly begun the symphony when they heard a voice at the very foot of the stairs echoing the porter's words, "Not at home? *Is* at home! Confound the fellow! can't he speak plain?" And presently Sir Frederic Manning's name was announced in the outer drawing-room.

"Hush! Stay," said Mdlle. Mohr, sliding from the piano, "there is my strange acquaintance. No; don't let him come in, Mr. Courtenay!"

"Who is in the other room?" said Mr. Courtenay to Ada.

"Only Mrs. Palmer and Mrs. Lee, with mamma," she replied.

"I must take pity on him, then," said Courtenay, going to the folding-doors.

Mrs. Thomason was standing between "the coming and parting guests," returning the adieux of the matrons, and the salutation of Sir Frederic.

"Why, Charles," said she, turning round, "I did not know you were here. I am in such trouble! Sir Frederic, I hope you will excuse—you will find my daughter in the next room. You don't know, Charles, how insolent Gilbert has been this morning. I suppose Ada has not said a word to you. Oh, I gave him warning on the spot; but I wanted to consult you about getting another butler."

Sir Frederic darted through the folding-doors at the beginning of this exordium. He bowed to Ada, shook hands with Leonard, and then turned to Mdlle. Mohr, who was putting on her bonnet for the second time at the glass over the chimney-piece.

"What! *you* here?" he said, advancing to her.

Leonard could not but admire the total change in her manner, all her familiar ease seemed to vanish. She bowed in silence, finished tying the strings, and smoothing the dark bands of her hair with her finger, and then took the corner of the couch next to Ada.

"But the 'Erl-King'?" said Ada, smiling.

"You were going to sing!" exclaimed Sir Frederic, starting up; "begin at once, I entreat you!"

"Pray don't disappoint us," said Leonard.

"Now you are all of you teasing Mdlle. Mohr to death," said Mrs. Thomason, coming in with Mr. Courtenay; "I beg, mademoiselle, that you won't attend to them."

"This is a promise," said the German, drawing off her gloves.

Sir Frederic took the gloves from her, and held them while she sang.

"It's too affecting," said Mrs. Thomason, wiping her eyes.

"Mamma always cries at the 'Erl-King,' you know," said Ada.

"Yes; even when *you* sing it," said Mrs. Thomason; "though of course it's not to be compared with Mdlle. Mohr."

"What! you sing, then?" said Sir Frederic, crossing to Ada.

"Yes; I sing," replied Miss Thomason, calmly.

"Ten thousand thanks," said Sir Frederic, giving the gloves back to Mdlle. Mohr.

She bowed and turned to Mr. Courtenay.

"Will you have the goodness to ring for my brougham?" she said.

"It is at the door; but you are not going?" exclaimed Sir Frederic.

The German bowed, and went up to Mrs. Thomason, to take leave.

"Miss Thomason, intercede for us; another ballad," said Sir Frederic.

"Well, good morning," said the German to Ada, taking both her hands.

"I shall see you to-night at Mrs. Anstruther's," said Ada.

"Yes, for half-an-hour. *Sans adieu!*"

And Mdlle. Mohr gave her hand to Mr. Courtenay, who led her downstairs.

Sir Frederic, instead of attempting to follow, stood wrapt in complation before the statue of Ada.

"And so you set off next week, Mr. Warrenne?" said Ada. "I am disposed to envy you."

"But you have been abroad?" said Leonard.

"Yes, as far as Naples; but you mean to extend your tour to Greece, do you not?"

"Yes; and I have some thoughts of going on to Egypt," said Leonard.

"But, Mr. Warrenne, oblige me in one thing; don't, please, publish your tour," said Ada; "it adds so much to one's duties, having to go through a great deal of that kind of reading."

"I can safely promise you that, Miss Thomason," said Leonard. "I have no turn for authorship."

"I don't feel quite sure of you," said Ada; "the Pyramids are very apt to set people off. Do you remember, Charles, all those pictures of Napoleon's career in the Palais Royal?"

"Vile things they were, too," said Mr. Courtenay; "I suppose the Pyramids put you in mind of his Egyptian campaign?"

"Exactly. If you go to Paris, Mr. Warrenne, don't forget to see the statue of the Duc d'Orleans at Versailles; it is worth the journey."

"And the statue of Valléda, in the gardens of the Luxembourg, which I like still better," said Courtenay.

"Do you like the Jeanne d'Arc?" said Leonard.

"It is extremely pretty," said Ada, ; "and I never saw a good cast of it; there's so much more detail in the original, and the hands are very fine."

"I thought that, being a royal production, it had perhaps been over-praised," said Leonard.

"And so it has," replied Courtenay; "there are none of those wonderful emotions that people affect to trace in her face. She is a handsome, diffident girl, in a very effective costume; and a good copy of her would look very well, Ada, in the recess at the end of your dining-room."

"Yes, if we could get a good copy," said Ada.

"A very beautiful thing, on my word," said Sir Frederic, who had been prowling round and about the statue of Ruth all this time.

"It is by an English artist in Rome," said Ada.

"Why, it is yourself!" exclaimed Sir Frederic.

"Didn't you find that out before?" said Courtenay.

"No; but it's a capital idea, being taken in character; whose thought was it?"

"Mine," said Courtenay; "I always thought a woman with a wet towel thrown over her shoulder a ridiculous subject for the chisel; but here the drapery and the attitude are both called for by the subject."

"A wet towel," said Ada, laughing; "that is so like Charles; because, you know, Mr. Warrenne, that sculptors damp the cloth with which they cast their draperies."

"Oh, Courtenay, I'll tell you a piece of news, if you haven't seen the papers this morning," said Sir Frederic.

"Well, out with it," returned Mr. Courtenay.

"Old Reynolds has just landed, and has brought with him a wife and two children."

"You don't say so! Two children?"

"Married a widow, with two children, just before he left India. An agreeable surprise to the fair Florence," said Sir Frederic.

"Do her all the good in the world," returned Courtenay.

"Well, then, I am quite ashamed of Mr. Reynolds, and I think he has been doing a very unjust thing," said Mrs. Thomason, who had hitherto been sighing over her knitting in a manner peculiar to herself, without seeming to listen to the conversation. "Second marriages are all very well where there are no children—people have a right to please themselves; but here's a young woman, brought up with the full expectation of keeping her father's house, and I say it is a cruel thing to set a stepmother over her. You may say what you like, Charles, but it is a piece of injustice. It is just as if Mr. Thomason were to marry again, and bring home some woman to tyrannize over poor Ada!"

And Mrs. Thomason's large, white hand, flashing with rubies and diamonds, after a good deal of scuffling in her apron pockets, carried her embroidered handkerchief to her eyes.

"There's rather a substantial obstacle to such a piece of cruelty on my uncle's part," said Courtenay, glancing his keen eye on the well-filled arm-chair which contained Mrs. Thomason; "and I trust that poor Miss Reynolds will do what I should recommend to poor Ada in a similar case—look out for a home of her own!"

"She has been doing that too much, and too often, already," said Mrs. Thomason. "I never encouraged much intimacy between her and Ada. I wish my daughter to be civil to everybody; but we must make distinctions. Miss Reynolds is talked of everywhere; a shocking thing for a young woman to be talked about! I believe, my dear Ada, you were a witness to the shameful way she flirted with Lord Thomas Mortimer, at the last Academy Ball—(a very handsome young man, but the worst character in London). Lord Thomas would not speak to her the other evening at Lady Jane Lockwood's—he had been intimate with poor Captain O'Neill!"

"Birds of a feather—" said Sir Frederic.

Mrs. Thomason, having unburdened her mind, relapsed into her knitting and sighing.

"Not but what I always thought Thomas Mortimer a very good fellow," added Sir Frederic.

"Does not a 'good fellow' always mean a 'bad man'?" asked Ada.

"Always!" replied Courtenay.

"Now, faith, Miss Thomason, that's too severe," said Sir Frederic; "but I must be off. I'm going to see after a bouquet for Mdlle. Mohr. She plays in the *Somnambula* to-night—on my word, it's an exquisite thing, that statue!"

And Sir Frederic, after going round the statue once more, made a hasty bow all round, and hurried out of the room.

"That's the most singular fellow I ever met with," said Courtenay.

"He seems to have been very active in that shipwreck off the Sussex coast," said Ada.

"Oh yes; he happened to be at Hastings for a day or two, and he thought it the best fun in the world, going out to the wreck and bringing off the passengers," said Courtenay.

"He risked his own life, at any rate," said Ada.

"That he does every day," said Leonard. "It was only the other day, that, coming home rather tipsy, he drove down the side of a chalk-pit—he said he thought it would be a shorter way home. His horses were killed on the spot; his carriage broken to pieces, and he really escaped with very little injury! He was under my father's care for a few days, and then started off to commit some new follies."

"What a curious person!" said Ada, earnestly.

"Ah! women always like that sort of thing," said Courtenay; "any kind of notoriety, no matter what!"

"I don't like it," said Ada; "but one can't help wondering what will be the end of such a person."

"He ought to have broken his neck long ago," said Courtenay.

"He is very much liked on his estate; he is very charitable—often when he has nothing to give," observed Leonard.

"Come, Moonshine,—you can't mend that," said Courtenay, rising. "Take leave of the ladies, and pray include in your tour a treatise on the new method of being charitable at a small expense."

(*To be continued.*)

OF GIVING.

IT has been said that you can judge a man's character by what he finds laughable; but, in our idea, a still better test of character is a man's style of giving. If the gift does not in itself reflect the giver, as Emerson said it should, then certainly the manner of giving does so, and is easily read. There is the open, frank, generous style; there is the mock depreciating style—("just a trifle, you know, not worthy of the occasion or of the recipient, but enough to mark the feelings of the giver!"); there is the bumptious, effusive, self-satisfied style; there is the subdued and retiring style; there is the vulgar, purse-proud, patronising style; and one or two more. It was evidently of the very highest style of giver that Southey was thinking when he wrote:—

> "Moments there are in life—alas, how few!—
> When, casting cold prudential doubts aside,
> We take a generous impulse for our guide,
> And, following promptly what the heart thinks best,
> Commit to Providence the rest;
> Sure that no after-reckoning will arise
> Of shame or sorrow, for the heart is wise.
> And happy they who thus in faith obey
> Their better nature: err sometimes they may,
> And some sad thoughts lie heavy in the breast,
> Such as by hope deceived are left behind;
> But like a shadow these will pass away
> From the pure sunshine of the peaceful mind."

Quarles of the 'Emblems' has some very wise and apt passages on this subject which we must present here:—

"Be careful to whom thou givest and how: he that gives him that deserves not, loses his gift, and betrays the giver. He that confers his gift upon a worthy receiver, makes many debtors, and by giving, receives. He that gives for his own ends, makes his gift a bribe, and the receiver a prisoner. He that gives often, teaches requittance to the receiver, and discovers a crafty confidence in the giver. Take heed rather what thou receivest, than what thou givest. What thou givest leaves thee; what thou takest sticks by thee. He that presents a gift buys the receiver; he that takes a gift sells his liberty."

Shakespeare has many characteristic utterances on this subject—one in 'Hamlet' which most readers will remember; but the following, from 'Twelfth Night,' almost exhausts one side of the subject:—"These wise men that give fools money get themselves a good report—after fifteen years' purchase;" which suffices to show in what direction some of Shakespeare's social experiences had lain. Bacon has the following in his Essays on the shrewd behaviour of

Queen Elizabeth in these matters, which was altogether characteristic of her :—

"Queen Elizabeth was dilatory enough in suits, of her own nature; and the Lord Treasurer Burleigh, to feed her humour, would say to her: 'Madam, you do well to let suitors stay; for I shall tell you, *Bis dat, qui cito dat.* If you want them speedily, they will come again the sooner.'"

Sir Henry Taylor has this wise reflection on the conduct of two classes of givers :—

"He who only gives what he would as readily throw away, gives without generosity, for the essence of generosity is self-sacrifice. Waste, on the contrary, comes always by indulgence, and the weakness and softness in which it begins will not prevent the hard-heartedness to which all selfishness tends at last."

There are very few men who have not at one time or another been exposed to the importunities of those who have fallen in the world, and who subsist upon small doles or gifts from old friends and acquaintances. They are for the most part hopeless persons, whom no such gifts can *really* help, and their pertinacity in asking is only equalled by their shamelessness. The present writer has had his share of this kind of persecution, and has even had his position made very difficult by his unwillingness to treat such men rudely. But it was forced upon him in the end, and he has invariably felt that it would have been much better had he done it at the first. Not that he could ever subscribe to Baron Rothschild's dictum: "Have nothing to do with unfortunate people;" for he will admit that some of his most pleasant hours have been spent in the society of men who did not succeed in the world's view of success, but who maintained a tender sensibility and a rare independence, and achieved a considerable intellectual culture.

But these men belong to another type than that type we would here warn our readers against. They are the men who form a love of drink and of idle company, and go to the bad. Beware of them. When they begin to ask if you have a loose half-crown or a shilling to give them, it is time to be chary. Not a bad plan is to give them the *loan* of, perhaps, double what they have asked, innocently but firmly intimating that you will expect to be repaid the next time you meet; and ten to one you will never see them again, or if you do, they will try to avoid you. Freedom from their importunities is, in our idea, cheaply purchased at such a price. And you need not be afraid to put the matter on such a basis; for if any remnants of honour are left, the man will be anxious to repay; if not is he not well got rid of?

A. H. Japp, LL.D.

XANTHI.

A LEGEND OF THE ISLES OF GREECE.

By F. M. F. Skene.

AMONG those beautiful "Isles of Greece" which stud the bosom of the blue Egean, like jewels sparkling in the perpetual sunshine, there is one that has a special attraction for the people of that lovely land. Not because of its picturesque heights crowned with the wild olive and myrtle, and its groves of lemon and orange, whose fragrance is wafted far out to sea, but in consequence of the peculiar virtue said to be possessed by its ancient Byzantine Church. This is a large, many-domed building, its narrow windows admitting very little light into its vast and dim interior, and for some occult reason it is believed that within its sanctuary alone can persons possessed of a devil be released from their terrible enemy.

This explanation was given to an astute Englishman, lately visiting the island, by an old priest who was standing on the outer steps, clad in the sombre robes and black crape veil which the Eastern Church maintains to be the unchanged garb worn by the Apostles themselves. The British traveller received the information with an unmistakable sneer.

"Do you mean that you Greeks believe in demoniacal possession?" he said.

The priest looked fixedly at him as he answered calmly:

"Has the English Kurios ever read the Evangelio?"

"Of course I have! I know that the Gospel speaks of fiends being cast out of human beings; but that is nearly nineteen hundred years ago—there is nothing of the kind now."

"Indeed! Do you imagine that the devils are all dead since then, or that they are asleep? Two days ago I could have shown you a man chained to that pillar before the holy doors"—he pointed to the interior of the church—"who was being tormented by a yelling blaspheming demon that had taken possession of his miserable body. It was cast out of him by the sacred rites, and now, clothed and in his right mind, the Christianos thanks God."

"A poor lunatic, I suppose," said the Briton contemptuously.

"Have a care English Kurios," said the priest solemnly. "You may learn to your cost that if it is possible for us to entertain an angel unawares, it is yet more easy to have the companionship of a demon and know it not. Do you still doubt? Go"—he stretched out his hand towards the white, sunlit town that lay beneath them—"go there and learn the story of Xanthi, the daughter of Demetrius, and

you will doubt no more. Go! It is written in the island records, and yet more indelibly in the hearts of the people, who have been taught by it that the devils are neither dead nor sleeping."

The old priest's manner was strangely impressive, though he spoke in the imperfect Italian interspersed with Greek words, which was his only means of communication with the foreigner; and the Englishman felt constrained to obey. He went down to the town, and there quickly learnt, in all its details, a weird, extraordinary legend, which seems worthy of a further record here.

* * * * *

The dawn of a summer day in Greece. What a vision of loveliness do these words recall to any who have been privileged to witness such a sight in that fair Morning Land! The pure pale stars are lingering still within the deep blue cloudless vault, but it merges into clearer, softer hues towards the horizon as if the East were unfolding gates of pearl, and then a blush of loveliest roseate hue steals over all the wide expanse with exquisite reflections on the mountain heights below: a faint sighing breath rises from the tranquil sea, drawing out the aromatic scent of the wild thyme and the delicate fragrance of the oleander rose, gently swaying the tall slender palm trees and the white myrtle blossoms that have caught the growing light, and shine like snowflakes among the dark green leaves; then suddenly, swift and imperious, the sun seems to bound up from beneath the horizon line, and in a moment the flood of golden glory has swept over sky and earth and sea, the birds have burst into song with rapturous greeting —and it is day—the glowing Eastern day once more.

The sunrise had been perfect in its beauty, but where was there ever a lovely scene on earth into which no sight or sound of human pain could enter? It was so here—the pain and anguish of a most passionate despair.

A young man lay dying on the open-air terrace of a house that stood in a lonely spot on the mountain side of the island, and by his side, in an uncontrolled agony of grief, was the beautiful young girl who was to have become his bride at the altar but a few days later.

Xanthi was the only child of a saintly old man, who had given himself wholly to religion when the sudden death of the young wife he adored had taken from him the desire of his eyes at a stroke. He built himself this calm retreat among the mountain woods, and left it only to go down day by day to the ancient church, for the solemn rite always celebrated there at sunrise. His daughter, educated at Athens, had come back to him a few months previously, and he had been thankful to find that she was betrothed to the noble high-principled son of a wealthy Athenian, for he dreaded that her passionate, impulsive temperament should render her difficult of control, and he knew that Spiridion was one who would guide her safely through the troublesome paths of life. Only one fear still rankled in the old man's heart for his child. He saw that her love for her betrothed

amounted to absolute idolatry, and so absorbed her whole being that no power was left in her for that higher, purer Love which is the sunshine of eternity.

Well might he tremble for her that morning, when he left her to go and pray before the Shrine, that the dread calamity impending over her might yet be averted. She kneels by that couch, an image of the cruel helplessness with which the living must ever look upon the face of death. She has the refined, classic features of the high-born Greek, and her dark eyes glow with all the fire of her Southern nature. The rich masses of her flowing hair fall round her like a veil as she turns again and again, with wild words of endearment, to him who responds no more to her caresses.

Only the day before, in the full vigour of his splendid manhood, he had chased the antelope upon the hills with foot as fleet, and seemed in his strength and brilliant beauty as if no peril could ever touch him. Yet there he lies, white and motionless as a marble statue, the finely-moulded limbs rigid and powerless; a sunstroke had suddenly felled him to the earth as if some giant hand had dealt him a fatal blow. His servants had borne him back to Xanthi's care, and laid him down where the soft night air could play on his pallid countenance; but no human aid could avail to restore the life quenched by the deadly sun-shaft. He had never moved or spoken; only breathing faintly through the hours of darkness; and when the dawn broke over his beautiful still face, it was plain that the slow sighing breath was but fanning the wings of the departing spirit. Then a full conviction of the awful desolation about to fall on her stabbed like a keen knife Xanthi's passionate heart.

"No, Spiridion—my Spiridion! you shall not go! You shall not leave me, light of my life. Oh, heaven, save him!" and, in a perfect frenzy of prayer, she flung herself upon the ground, and shrieked out her wild unbridled demands to the Almighty Creator to give her back the idol of her heart from the very jaws of death. In vain! her father, just returned from his orisons, lifts her from the earth and bids her bow to the will of the Most High. "Spiridion is dead!"

Dead! She tears herself out of her father's restraining arms and dashes herself down where she can look into that beloved face. Yes, the unmistakable stamp of death is there; the pale lips wear that strange and meaning smile, which seems ever to tell of some wondrous revelation that dawns on the released spirit; her frantic kisses only meet with the chill as of senseless marble. He is surely gone; her idol is torn from her. Then Xanthi flings up her arms with a wild defiant cry, and appals her father by the terrible words she utters in her mad rebellion.

"He died while I prayed for him in my mortal anguish. God has denied me the one life I asked out of all His millions! Then with Him I plead no more; but if there be a Power in the very depths of hell itself, that can give me back the treasure of my heart, on him I

call, be the cost what it may. Master of evil, restore—restore to me the life God ravished from my supplication!"

Her father made the sign of the Cross in horror, adjuring her to cease from such words of blasphemy, but she seemed not to hear him; falling forward, with her head on the breast of her dead lover, she lay moaning in her cruel pain; hopeless, in actual fact, that any Power, good or evil, could ever reanimate that senseless form.

The old man hurried away to his oratory, that before the Icon of his Redeemer he might seek to win pardon for his erring child. Xanthi remained alone, conscious only of the intolerable sense of loss and desolation that weighed upon her breaking heart.

Suddenly she started violently—was it possible that she felt a faint heaving of the breast on which her head was laid? She sprang to her feet and bent over the death-like face, trembling in almost an agony of reawakening hope; was it possible that a soft sigh was passing from those cold lips, that the white eyelids were quivering as if about to be uplifted and let the light of her life look out on her once more?

Breathless, her heart beating to suffocation, she stood motionless, scanning that beloved face. Incredible as it seemed, there surely were the tokens of rekindling life; a warm flush was stealing over it; a moment more and the eyes that had seemed for ever closed opened wide and turned their gaze on her. They were indeed her Spiridion's beautiful eyes; but even in that first instant of bewildering, unutterable joy, something there was in their expression which seemed to strike a chill to her heart; it seemed as if they were fastened on her with malignant triumph.

But she had no time to let the thought take root within her, for, to her complete amazement, Spiridion sprang from his couch, apparently as strong and vigorous as if no fatal malady had sapped his springs of life, and in the rapture of his passionate embrace, as he caught her almost fiercely in his arms, she forgot all but that her idol was restored to her longing heart.

It mattered nothing to her by what miracle he lived again. When she grew calm with the certainty that he had really been snatched from death to be her own once more, she would have questioned him as to the sensations which had called him back to life; he stopped her with a strange anger, which almost terrified her; she was never to allude to that hateful subject again, he said; the night of misery she had passed was to be forgotten; he was hers and she was his, and they were to enjoy life together, without a shadow or a scruple. She spoke of her father, and said they must go to tell him of this wondrous restoration; but Spiridion thundered out a vehement "No! Let the canting old hypocrite alone," he said, and she thought to herself that surely it must be the trace of lingering illness which made him so unlike her own Spiridion; but she looked up into the well-known beautiful face, and the potent love that bound her to him made her careless of all, save that he lived, and they would part no more.

She agreed with joyful rapture when he bade her come out with him to ramble in the woods, and they turned towards the steps which led from the terrace to the garden.

But there a very strange event occurred.

Her father had just come from the inner rooms, and started in overwhelming amazement at sight of Spiridion standing in full vigour of life with his arm round Xanthi; but before he could express his astonishment, the attention of all three was attracted by Spiridion's dog, which had been lying at the foot of the steps. It was a magnificent wolf-hound of the breed noted for unswerving faithfulness to man, and it had been absolutely devoted to its master, following him wherever he went, and cringing at his feet for a caress from the hand it loved so well. All through the night it had lain where it could see the couch whereon its master lay, refusing to move or to taste food, as if conscious of his fatal illness. It raised its head when Spiridion began to descend the steps, then suddenly started up, trembling convulsively as if struck by a paroxysm of furious terror. For a moment it glared at the young man with an extraordinary expression of hatred and horror, and then bounding forward it sprang at his throat, and would have strangled him, had not Spiridion seemed endowed with miraculous strength, for he simply caught the huge animal by the neck, and swung it in the air before he flung it from the terrace into the garden below, where it lay stunned and motionless.

Xanthi had been amazed and terrified, but Spiridion soothed her with a light laugh, saying that the dog had no doubt been driven wild by hunger; and then, taking her hand in a firm grasp, he drew her away from the terrace without so much as a word of greeting to her father.

The old man watched them till they disappeared into the wood, heart-sick with an inexplicable terror. Spiridion's marvellous restoration to life might have been explained by the supposition that he had been only in a trance which simulated death; but a dread instinct seemed to warn him that some dark mystery lay behind that strange event, and the singular action of the dog had for him a terrible significance.

He remembered, shuddering, his daughter's impious prayer to the Powers of Evil. Could it be that they had indeed responded to it? how or by what means he could not tell; only a horror and fear of his child's restored lover took possession of him, which drove him back to his oratory, there to fall prostrate before the sacred Icon, and seek some grace of inspiration to teach him how to deal with this dire mystery.

That day passed for Xanthi in an intoxication of delight at her restored happiness. Her intense, impassioned love for Spiridion could hardly have been deepened even by the terrible anguish she had suffered when she believed that he was for ever lost to her in

death; but it had caused her to cling to her recovered treasure with a frantic unreasoning determination, that nothing in heaven or on earth should ever part them more.

Spiridion fanned the flames of her devouring passion by the burning words of love he poured into her ears. He told her with almost stern vehemence that he would no longer consent to wait even the ten days which were to have elapsed before their bridal, in order that it might take place on one of the high festivals of the Church. They must be wed the very next morning, and he would bear her away over the summer seas for a pleasure voyage, where they could be alone and all in all to each other. It was a prospect of radiant joy to Xanthi, and she agreed readily, only hoping that her indulgent father, who had always been willing to grant her every wish, would not oppose her in this supreme desire.

They sauntered home together when the sun, that had risen on Xanthi's brief despair, was setting in that which was in truth her most golden hour of life.

Spiridion had left her only for a little time that day, when he said he had some orders to give to the crew of his yacht which lay in a little bay not far from the house, waiting to bear them away when their bridal should have been accomplished; and as they reached the terrace he flung himself down on the couch where he had so lately seemed to die, and Xanthi knelt fondly by his side.

Presently a slow solemn step was heard, and her father came out upon the terrace and approached them with so grave and portentous an aspect that Xanthi quailed at the sight. His pure and noble countenance was darkened by a strange severity. He held upraised in his hands the silver Icon of the Redeemer—the most sacred object he possessed. Not uttering a word he drew near to Spiridion and made the sign of the Cross over him with the Holy Image.

Instantly the young man uttered a perfect yell of agony, as if scorched and burned by an ardent flame. He dashed himself off the couch with such violence that Xanthi was flung on the ground, and by an almost incredible leap bounded over the balustrade of the terrace, where his steps could be heard flying along the garden paths beneath.

In an instant Xanthi had rushed down the steps and followed him, fearing he had been taken ill. She found him standing at a little distance under an olive tree, and he met her with a smile and soft words of endearment. A sudden spasm of pain had caught him, he said, and made him act so strangely; but it was past. He was well and would soon return to the house; but she must go back at once and compel that old man, her father, to retire for the night so that he might not have to see him again.

"He sickens me with his senseless incantations," said Spiridion fiercely. "I have long since cast off his old-world faith, and so must you, Xanthi."

"Spiridion! You have cast off the faith, who were always the most devout among the worshippers at our church. You cannot mean it!"

"I do! I abhor that faith! I only pretended that I believed it to please you and your senseless old father; but I will have no more of such folly, nor shall you. You are mine now, heart and soul"—and his eyes glared upon her with a strange menace; then seeing that she looked almost terrified, he soothed her with a fond embrace, and she murmured, "Yes, Spiridion, I am yours for ever."

"Mine for ever," he echoed. "But go, Xanthi. Rid me of the sight of that superstitious old man, then I will come back and we shall have a joyous evening together."

Xanthi left him reluctantly; but his word was law to her, and she felt an unwonted repulsion towards her father because he had shown no sign of joy on Spiridion's return to life. She found him seated upon the terrace still holding the sacred Icon in his hands. He called her to him in a voice of the utmost tenderness, and drew her down on the couch by his side.

"Xanthi, my only child, my only tie on earth, you believe that I love you—fondly, devotedly, you alone, indeed, in all this lower world."

"Yes, father," she answered, melting at the deep emotion in his words. "I know that you have always loved me better perhaps than I deserve."

"Then, my child, you will not doubt that it is with keenest suffering I feel compelled to give you pain—to strike a final blow at that which you believe to be your highest happiness."

"Father, what do you mean?" she exclaimed alarmed. "Spiridion is restored to me, and nothing can touch my happiness while I have him."

"There is your cruel trial, my child," he answered solemnly. "From Spiridion you must part at once and for ever."

She sprang to her feet with flashing eyes and hands clenched.

"Part from my lover! from him who is the very life of my life! Are you mad, father, to speak such senseless words to me?"

The old man caught her by the wrist and forced her to meet his stern eyes.

"Xanthi, that man is evil—evil to the core. I know not whether your impious prayer to hold him back from death, drew down the curse of heaven upon him, but this I know, there is fiendish wickedness in his looks—in his actions. You yourself saw how he fled shrieking from the holy Sign; I saw him when he left your side this afternoon go stealthily to the spot where his poor faithful dog was lying, and stab him to death with a malignant cruelty of which I spare you the horrible details; he uttered shocking words as he left it mangled on the ground, which showed that he had revenged himself on the noble animal because its instinct had detected in him the enemy of its

Creator. Some awful change has passed over him since I gave my consent to your marriage, and now I tell you I withdraw it utterly."

"Then I shall marry him without it," she exclaimed passionately. "What care I for your accusations against him? he is more to me than all the world—my life, my all; and to-morrow the priest shall bind us together to be parted never more."

"Xanthi, he has already changed you indeed, since you can thus rebel against me! but I will save you from him; that man shall not again set his foot within my doors, and you shall never be his wife."

"Who shall prevent me?" she answered with fiery scorn. "Not you, father, for I will leave you and follow him to the world's end. No one on earth shall keep me from him."

"Shall not Christ?" exclaimed the old man, as he rose with solemn dignity from his seat and held up the sacred Icon of the Redeemer before her eyes. "If you defy me and all on earth, at least you dare not defy your Lord."

"Yes," she said frantically, spreading out her hands between the holy Image and herself, "even Him, if He stands between me and my beloved. I go to him, and I will never leave him, do what you will!"

And with one bound she cleared the space that lay between her and the terrace steps, and flying down to the garden below she would have rushed away to seek her lover. But she had not far to go. Spiridion was standing under the terrace-wall, where he could hear all that her father had said, and but for the shadows of the falling night which veiled his face, she must have seen the expression of fiendish malignity which distorted his beautiful features. He seized her hand in a grasp of iron.

"I have heard all," he said; "now, Xanthi, you are mine wholly and for ever—you return to that house no more. Come, let us fly before that wicked old man tries to take you from me." And hand in hand they fled through the woods, and never relaxed their breathless flight till they reached the seashore.

"There is my yacht," exclaimed Spiridion triumphantly, as he signalled to his crew to bring a boat that they might go on board. "We shall soon be on her deck, and then away over the seas I will bear my prize to a glorious life of joy and freedom."

He gave a strange sinister laugh as he spoke; but Xanthi, clinging to his arm, exclaimed in broken accents, "Spiridion, I long to go with you—I love you above all the world; but my honour still is dear to me—I am not yet your wife."

"Fear nothing," he cried exultingly, "you shall bear my name to-morrow. I will have our wedding-rites celebrated a few hours hence. It will be a grand ceremonial!"

And again his mocking laugh rang over the waters, but Xanthi trusted him, and was content. He lifted her into the boat as it touched the shore, and they quickly reached the yacht. It was

crowded with dark figures who appeared to Xanthi unlike the crew she had formerly seen; but she was with Spiridion and she asked nothing more.

The yacht seemed to fly over the waters, though the night was calm, as if some strange blast impelled it, and long before the dawn they had anchored close to the lonely shore of an island that was very scantily peopled.

Here Spiridion landed with Xanthi, telling her that their marriage would take place at once, and be none the less binding because it was celebrated in the open air. He did not choose to enter a church, he said, but there was the priest ready to perform the ceremony; and he pointed with a strange smile to a dark figure standing behind a heap of stones that had been piled together to simulate an altar.

As Xanthi stood before this man, who wore what seemed to be the usual ecclesiastical robes, she noticed that his face was completely hid by the black crape veil which was drawn across it, and that the Cross was absent from the various parts of the vestments on which it ought to have appeared. Some of the crew stood round as witnesses, and as her eyes glanced from one to the other, she was almost appalled at the malignant looks they cast upon her by the light of the flaming torches they held. It was, however, the manner and actions of the veiled priest which filled Xanthi with mysterious terror so soon as the rite began. He muttered strange words, he performed unwonted ceremonies which she could not understand; the incense he used, instead of sending forth its well-known fragrance, emitted a pungent odour which confused her senses. When the sign of the Cross should have been made, the rapid movement of his hands appeared to invert it in some sinister manner which caused her to shudder with sudden horror; the book he held out to her had no resemblance to the Holy Gospels she should have kissed; and when he placed the ring on her finger, it cut her hand so that it was stained with blood.

The whole ghastly ceremony affected her so painfully that she fell almost fainting in her lover's arms when it was over. But he speedily bore her back to the vessel, and spoke to her passionate words of love, which soon dispelled all darker thoughts in the one glad certainty that she was his for ever. The priest had disappeared, and they set sail upon a voyage which was destined to prove a terrible revelation to Xanthi.

Very soon it became evident to her that her Spiridion was simply the captain of a pirate crew of robbers and murderers. Day by day she was compelled to witness deeds of cruelty and wickedness which filled her with horror and dismay; while Spiridion used unceasing efforts to corrupt her whole mind and spirit, to destroy her faith and harden her to the sight of atrocities against which she would once have revolted. Soon she became possessed of an indescribable terror of himself, for he had acquired a terrible power over her, since that strange rite by the seashore, against which she struggled vainly. She

trembled at his slightest word; even an angry look from him flung her into a convulsion of fear. She knew not what she dreaded, but she felt that she could not resist him, even if he drove her to the commission of deadly crimes. Yet her intense love for him still reigned supreme in her woman's heart. It held her bound to him indeed at the cost of all that remained to her of holiness and innocence, when he told her, with mocking laughter, after a time, that it had been no true priest, but one of his own vile crew who had united them by an awful parody of the marriage rites. His conquest was indeed complete when she clung to him even in dishonour; and he prepared then the last blow by which he hoped to precipitate her into a very gulf of perdition.

One night, when Xanthi lay sleeping, Spiridion set fire to the vessel, seeming to call up flames that enveloped it with marvellous rapidity. She woke up, shrieking with terror, and he quickly caught her in his arms, and said they must swim for their lives. He plunged with her into the sea, and she became unconscious as the waters closed over her head.

When she again opened her eyes, she was lying on the shore of her own island home. She instantly recognised it, and looked up bewildered to Spiridion, who was standing by her side. Then rapidly he told her, that this was the nearest land to which he could bring her, when the flaming ship sunk in the sea; and that it was fortunate for them it was so, as all that he possessed in the world had gone down with that vessel, and now gold must be got for him by Xanthi's own hand.

"There is your father's house," he said, fixing his eyes upon her with the terrible look of power which gave him so absolute a mastery over her; "and you know that he keeps money in a purse which lies under his pillow. That gold I must have, and your hand must take it from beneath the old man's head."

"What—you would have me rob my father?" she exclaimed, in horror.

"Yes, rob him—and more," he muttered, with his fiendish laugh.

"Oh, Spiridion, it is too much! I am still his child—his own child. I cannot—I cannot!"

"You can do whatever I will," he answered, glaring down at her with his blazing eyes.

She shivered under his gaze, and clasped her hands imploringly as she spoke.

"But he sleeps very lightly. He will awake and find me, his own daughter, trying to steal his money!"

"I can prevent any such risk," said Spiridion. "I will give you some sweet scent which you can hold to his nostrils, and his slumbers will not be disturbed; they will be very profound. But we must wait till the moon sets, so that we may slip into the house unperceived. I know that we can easily enter by the terrace window. Now

lie down and rest," he added, imperiously; "I will tell you when the right moment for your task has come."

There had been an unseen listener to this conversation lurking behind a rock where even Spiridion's keen eyes did not detect him. He was an old and faithful servant of Xanthi's father, who had been attracted to the shore that night by the spectacle of the blazing vessel; and as he heard the details of this cruel plot against his master, he rushed away to do his best to avert it. The house of the island priest was the nearest he could reach in the time, and he found that good man ready and anxious to be of use to his friend, and quite willing to go back with the servant and spend the night at the old man's house, if it was necessary for his protection; but he refused to believe that Xanthi, whom he had known as a fine, high-spirited girl from her infancy, could really intend to commit so dastardly an act as that of stealing money from her father, although she had set him at defiance by her clandestine marriage. The priest did not, therefore, disturb his friend when he found he had already retired for the night, but quietly lay down himself to sleep in another room.

The moon had gone down, and the night was as dark as it ever is under the clear skies of beautiful Greece, and Xanthi stood at the door of her father's sleeping apartment, held firmly in the iron grasp wherewith Spiridion had almost dragged her to the spot. He opened the door, and they both saw the venerable form of the saintly old man extended on his couch in a tranquil slumber. The silver Icon of the Redeemer hung on the wall by his side; and, as Spiridion caught sight of it, he shrank back cowering.

"I cannot enter there," he said hoarsely to Xanthi. "But go in quickly, lay this handkerchief on his mouth—he will not wake—take the purse from under his head, and come back to me. Go!"

All power of resistance had gone from his unhappy victim. She took the handkerchief, little dreaming that it was saturated with the deadly chloroform, she crept stealthily into the room, and covered her father's face with the poisoned silk. She heard him breathe for a moment heavily; then all was still, and he did not move as she gently raised the pillow and drew out the purse.

She hurried back to Spiridion, and put it into his hand. But the servant was on the watch, and he raised a shout which not only drew the priest instantly to the spot, but roused also the other men employed in the house, who came rushing up. They quickly surrounded Spiridion, while Xanthi flung her arms round him and hid her eyes on his breast.

The priest went quickly into her father's room, snatched the handkerchief from his face, and bent over him. Then, flinging up his hands in horror, he exclaimed:

"Miserable child, you have murdered your father!" He turned round as he spoke, and saw that Spiridion had thrust her from him and with his marvellous strength was freeing himself from the grasp

of the half-dozen men who held him, and was evidently about to make his escape. The priest caught the sacred Icon from the wall, and advanced toward him, holding it up before him, while he fixed on him a keen penetrating glance. Spiridion quailed before him, all strength seemed to leave him, and his hands fell powerless at his sides.

"He is a fiend!" exclaimed the priest. "I have cast out the like from the bodies of men, and I know that he is possessed of a devil. Bind him, hand and foot, with strong ropes, and let him be taken straight to the church, and chained there before the altar."

Xanthi looked up. She saw Spiridion in the hands of the horror-stricken men, who had knocked him down, and were furiously lashing the cords round his helpless limbs. She had heard the priest say that he was a devil; she knew that he had tempted her by his arts to murder her own father; that he had corrupted and destroyed her. Yet, woman-like, she loved him still. She held out her hands imploringly as the men raised him from the ground and bore him away.

"Oh, let me go with him!" she wailed. "My lover—my king; I am his, and he is mine!"

"Yes, unhappy woman," said the priest, as he took her firmly by the hand; "you shall go with him, and see with your own eyes that it is a demon from the depths of hell, who has lured you to your dreadful crimes and to destruction."

Holding her up, tortured and bewildered, he forced her to follow with him the steps of those who were bearing their terrible burden swiftly towards the church. Through the dark silent night the ghastly procession moved on; but the dawn was breaking when they reached the sanctuary, and already the island people were assembling for their morning sacrifice.

Standing in front of the holy doors, behind which the altar stood, the priest narrated to them the awful events of the night, and said that the solemn rite of exorcism must at once be performed, as they might not dare to offer their pure prayers in the presence of a fiend.

Spiridion was chained to a pillar. Xanthi crouched on the stone floor of the church behind him, and the dread ceremony commenced.

As it proceeded, the mysterious being, over whom the priest stood with the holy Symbols, uttered cries which thrilled all present with terror, and writhed in an agony which seemed as intolerable as if he were enveloped in burning flames. At length, when the culminating moment came, and the priest, making the sign of the Cross over the convulsed form, uttered the dread "Anathema Maranatha," and commanded the evil spirit to come out of the human body, of which it had usurped possession, Spiridion gave vent to a frightful scream, as if he were being rent asunder, and fell backwards on the pavement, still and motionless. Then, for the space of a second, a shadowy hideous shape was seen to flash through the church, and pass out by an open window, while the air seemed full of the wailing of innumerable

voices. All present fell prostrate, and remained in awed silence while the clear full tones of the priest chanted the concluding prayers; and when the final "Amen" had been said, and they raised their heads, the strange spectacle was before them of Spiridion lying extended in front of the altar, white and pure as monumental marble, with all trace of evil passions gone from his beautiful calm face.

"He is dead," said the priest, stretching out his hand in blessing over him; "and I know that he has never really lived since the hour when that woman's impious prayer to the Powers of Evil, drew a devil up from hell to personate him. Xanthi, rebel to your God and to the father your own hand has slain, behold your work! Look your last on the Christian man you gave over to the will of a demon. The devil has gone out of him, and he shall be laid with burial rites in consecrated ground to-day; and for you there remains naught but expiation and repentance, in sackcloth and in ashes, if such may be permitted to you even yet."

For thirty long years after that eventful day, a veiled woman, with hair white as snow, dwelt in a little wooden hut close to the church door. All her days, and many nights, were spent prostrate in tears and prayers upon its sacred threshold, never daring to draw nearer. No one spoke to her, no one approached her; only, by order of the priest, a loaf of bread was placed once a week on a stone outside her dwelling, and that alone sustained her.

At length, one night, on the eve of the great Anastasin (Easter), the priest, as he passed her, laid the end of his stole for a moment on her bowed head, and the people knew that it was the token of absolution.

Next morning, in the glorious Easter dawn, when they entered the church, Xanthi was found within the sacred precincts, lying lifeless on the spot where the released body of Spiridion had lain, and her worn face was lovely in its peace divine.

VOYAGE OF THE "PELICAN."

Out of Plymouth Sound, in drear December,
Sailed the stout Elizabethan crew;
Gaily crossed the wide Atlantic's bosom,
Glad to leave the Old World for the New;
Through the unknown, wild Magellan's passage,
Where no English ship had gone till now;
Toward the dreamed-of, wonderful Pacific,
Wound its dangerous way each cautious prow.

Ah, fair little fleet! so small at starting!
Only three of your five barques remain;
Soon a third is lost in the rough waters—
Winter's, too, has turned for home again;
One alone pursues her course undaunted—
Faithful *Pelican*, of deathless fame—
Fears not fire of foe, nor ocean's hazards,
Wealth of rich Peru the golden aim.

Onward Drake! to yet new scenes of danger,
In your gallant little privateer;
Though your deeds may sometimes seem but doubtful,
Still your daring to our hearts is dear;
Still with glowing sympathy we follow
All your bold career by land and sea;
Watch with sparkling eyes your captured treasure
Hoist a flag for every victory.

See you board the hapless Spanish galleon;
Seize the piled-up silver on the shore;
Cross the line in headlong chase for plunder;
Sail where never Briton sailed before.
Then, with princely wealth of gold and jewels
Safely stowed within the vessel's hold;
Steer athwart the great, untried Pacific,
Half whose wonders had not yet been told.

Now in eastern seas, 'midst tropic splendours,
Where the fire-fly flashes in the night;
Where kind nature yields her choicest bounties;
Stays the *Pelican* her rapid flight;
Feels her way through coral reefs and quick-sands—
Care nor courage shall avail her now—
She who flung defiance at the Spaniard,
To a subtler enemy must bow.

See the stately ship forlornly stranded!
Have her conquests then been all in vain?
Shall she never sight the English Channel—
Never Drake be welcomed home again?
Ah! a blessed breeze is softly blowing;
Sails all spread, she rises free at last;
Clears the Java Sea, and finds the ocean,
Leaving all her perils in the past.

Westward still she holds her course of triumph,
Doubles Afric's cape and northward flies;
Now she proudly rides in Plymouth harbour—
Queenly cynosure of Devon's eyes.
Valiant little vessel! surely worthy
That your deck be swept by royal robe;
Worthy, too, of your illustrious master—
You whose track has circled all the globe.

Future, fairer deeds shall be your hero's;
Worthier cause shall fire his warrior heart;
In our famous rout of the Armada
Shall he play a patriot's noble part;
Win his country's gratitude for ages;
By his private virtues claim our love;
Still, of all his countless deeds of daring,
Nothing more than these our souls shall move.

Now we sail around the world at leisure;
Earth's dread marvels languidly review;
Feel no kindling ardour; think it tedious—
Drawling "Nothing 'neath the sun is new."
Brave adventurer! we well may envy
All the fresh excitement of your course;
Well may wish this polished modern century
Found excitement in as healthful source.

Let us read our sailor-heroes' stories
Till our pulses quicken as we read;
Teach our children how to honour greatness—
All the glory of a gallant deed—
Ah! we can afford to be indulgent,
Midst the praises to forget the blame;
In those rougher days some lawless actions,
Scarce can dim Sir Francis' brilliant fame.

EMMA RHODES.

AN ADOPTED CHILD.

I.

FROM time immemorial Blankton had been a quiet little village, with nothing to distinguish it in any way from hundreds of similar villages scattered throughout the length and breadth of England. A rustic cricket match was an event in the annals of the parish. As a rule, the villagers found that the annual school treat and harvest home satisfied all their cravings for amusement. And then, all in a moment, Blankton became famous.

When the new line of railway, that was to carry civilisation into the most remote regions, had been planned, it had skirted contemptuously outside the village, not considering it even worthy of a wayside station. Yet after all it was through the instrumentality of the railway that Blankton achieved celebrity. That summer afternoon was long remembered in the neighbourhood, when what was locally known as the three o'clock express, instead of pressing on as usual to its far-off destination in the metropolis, suddenly forsook the line, and, plunging down the steep embankment, came to a standstill in a large field of standing oats. This deviation from the ordinary routine at once brought death and desolation to at least a dozen homes.

Amidst the hideous sights and sounds inseparable from a railway accident, one passenger remained comparatively calm. Miss Whimper was in the act of collecting her numerous parcels preparatory to getting out at the next station, when a series of irresistible jerks dashed her on the floor of the carriage, where she lay partially stunned while the engine ploughed such a furrow into the yielding earth, that many a harvest was gathered in before the ominous dent was altogether effaced. The jerks terminated in a comprehensive crash, after which Miss Whimper was surprised to find herself still alive. She lay for some time huddled up in a corner, vaguely expecting a renewal of the fearful leaps and jumps that had just subsided. All being still, it gradually occurred to her that she had better get up and see whether her parcels had sustained any injury. One especially, that contained a new tea-service, began to give her grave anxiety. This tea-service was the principal purchase she had made during a rare visit to some friends, and it would have been too vexing to find, after all, that some of the pretty blue and gold cups were chipped, or even broken. But Miss Whimper had some diffi-

culty in ascertaining the fate of her china, for it seemed that the carriage had in some mysterious way altered its shape while she was lying on the floor. The light now seemed to come from overhead, accompanied from time to time by a plentiful shower of broken glass. In vain she looked for the windows, and it was many minutes before she ascertained that she was lying on one of them, and staring up at the other.

"There must have been some sort of accident," she muttered, mechanically rearranging her bonnet strings. "What a mercy there is no more damage done! And how very fortunate I was travelling alone. Fancy rolling under the seat at my age! Why I could never have looked any one in the face again if I had been seen."

When the poor lady had laboriously freed herself from the heap of cushions and packages that had accumulated around her, she deliberately took out her handkerchief, tied it to the handle of her umbrella, and standing on tip-toe contrived to wave the little white pennon through the broken window above. Not that she was impatient. Other people she knew might have been inconvenienced by the strange vagaries of the engine. Probably the guard was at present busy explaining to the other passengers what had happened, and helping them to collect their loose parcels. Very possibly some of the other ladies had been frightened at first, as she had been, until it turned out that after all there was very little harm done. Miss Whimper had no fear of being neglected. Railway officials are proverbially attentive, and no doubt in response to her signal, one would soon come to her assistance. In point of fact about a quarter of an hour elapsed before a man's head appeared at the aperture above. On finding that the pale and begrimed stranger was not in any way connected with the train, Miss Whimper rather hesitated about accepting his proffered help, for she felt that an elderly lady of short stature must unavoidably present a somewhat ridiculous appearance climbing up a hat-rack, which, however, seemed the only visible mode of exit. She therefore, after an elaborate apology for the trouble she was giving, begged that the guard might be sent for without delay. The pale-faced man (remembering with a shudder how he had last seen the guard) replied that it was at present absolutely impossible to comply with her request, and that she must accept him as a substitute. After a short discussion Miss Whimper at last allowed him to hoist her bodily through the window. Her surprise was excessive on first realising her surroundings.

"Why, we are out in farmer Jackson's ten-acre piece, I declare!" she exclaimed in helpless astonishment. "Now, I was saying to myself that the oats were fit to cut as I looked out of the window, and here we are treading them down! What a pity it seems! I never knew—I fancied—what has happened?"

"Never mind," interrupted the pale-faced man. "Now just take my arm and shut your eyes."

Luckily the instinct of obedience was strong in Miss Whimper. She clung to the stranger's arm and walked forward blindfold, totally unconscious that she was passing sights that haunted many of the spectators to their dying day.

"Now I daresay you can find your way to the village," said the stranger, pausing as he reached a foot-path at the end of the field.

"Find my way indeed!" replied Miss Whimper, opening her eyes with a start. "Well, considering my father was Rector of Blankton for forty-three years, and that I was born and bred here, I should think I can find my way! That is my house, with the roses growing up the verandah, close to the church. When my dear father died, and I had to leave the Rectory, I said I could never live anywhere but——"

"Excuse me," interrupted the stranger, "if you are so near home, I advise you to walk quietly on. Your parcels? Oh yes, they are all right. Don't think of coming back. I must see if I can be of any more use. Oh, no; you could do nothing, and it really isn't a place for ladies." With these words he turned back towards the black, smoking mass that lay like an ugly blot on the waving yellow surface of the oats.

Miss Whimper continued her walk along the well-known path leading to the village. She felt rather shaken and fatigued by her recent experiences. "At my age one cannot tumble about with impunity," she thought; and then reflected sadly on her lack of presence of mind in not having particularly requested her late companion to rescue the new tea service. Presently an old woman hurried by, carrying a little girl of about two years old in her arms. From the child's appearance it was obvious that she had just been saved from the wreckage of the train.

"What a pretty little thing! Where are you taking her?" inquired Miss Whimper. "Who is in charge of her? Surely her mother or her nurse must be here!"

"Ay, they are here, like enough!" returned the woman. And in a few realistic words, she told Miss Whimper more about the accident than she even suspected before.

"Take the child to my house at once!" cried the old lady, trembling with horror as she dimly realized what she had just escaped. "The workhouse indeed! Never! whilst I have a home to offer the poor innocent!"

So the child's fate was decided, and Rose Cottage became her home. The next few days constituted an epoch of altogether unwonted excitement in Blankton. The village was overrun with reporters sent down by all the leading papers. They interviewed the clergyman, the schoolmaster, and the parish clerk. Any person who had witnessed the accident, even from a distance, was temporarily converted into a hero. It slowly dawned on Miss Whimper, as she saw sketches of her native village in all the illustrated papers, that she

had taken part in the most fatally famous railway accident of the year. "And to think that I was fidgetting all the time about those bits of china!" as she remarked to her friends, when they came to congratulate her on her wonderful escape. And then the conversation invariably drifted off to the forlorn little girl who ever since that dreadful day had been the petted idol of Miss Whimper's quiet household. So attached did the old lady become to her little charge that it was with a distinct sense of relief that she ascertained that all efforts to trace the child's parentage had failed. The only body that was not identified at the inquest was that of a homely looking, middle-aged woman, who a passenger remembered to have seen carrying the child at the last station. The extreme plainness of her clothes, compared with those of the little girl, caused it to be generally assumed that she was a nurse travelling with her mistress's child.

The name Beatrice, beautifully embroidered on the child's linen, was found to be no clue to her parentage. So all the advertisements, and police researches, having failed, the poor woman was quietly buried under the elm-trees in Blankton Churchyard, and little Beatrice was practically adopted by Miss Whimper.

II.

Blankton soon subsided again into its normal condition of peaceful obscurity. The sudden interest that the civilised world manifested in its doings, as suddenly died out again at the end of one short week. A powerful counter-attraction in the shape of a gigantic fire in a north country town, drew off all the reporters simultaneously, and Blankton's brief day of fame was over. Some green mounds in the churchyard, and a little golden-haired child at Rose Cottage, were the only permanent changes left by the famous accident.

As years rolled by, Beatrice rapidly developed from an engaging child into a very pretty girl. She also enjoyed the inestimable advantage of being the only person in Blankton with any approach to a history. As a matter of course she was the idol of Miss Whimper's declining years, and the old lady's modest income, which had hitherto been chiefly devoted to charitable purposes, was now freely lavished on Beatrice's education and pleasures. From sheer force of habit, the girl accepted it all without any special feeling of gratitude. Indeed it seemed quite natural that she should have the best of everything, being young, and consequently able to enjoy it. That Miss Whimper's brown stuff gown should be made by the village dressmaker, whilst Beatrice's costumes emanated from the most expensive establishment in the county town, seemed an altogether befitting arrangement, seeing that at twenty, clothes make such a difference to one's appearance, whilst a wrinkled little old lady, with

grey curls on either side of her face, must necessarily be outside the pale of all such considerations.

Human nature being what it is, it will not surprise any one to learn that Beatrice had her detractors; unpleasant people who talked about beggars on horseback, and dared to think that it would have been wiser to bring the girl up to earn her livelihood as a governess. But even those neighbours who held these views most strongly seldom dared to air them in the presence of Miss Whimper. From the first that good lady firmly maintained, that if ever the lost child's parentage came to be known, it would be found that she belonged to people moving in the highest ranks of society. Miss Whimper had repeated this formula so long, that she came to regard, what was after all only a supposition, completely in the light of a revealed truth. She consequently brought up her charge in the belief that she was of superior clay to her immediate surroundings, and Beatrice took very readily to the notion.

One bright day in the early autumn, this young lady might have been seen walking down the village street, with an unusually gloomy expression on her fair face. The little basket of dainties in her hand betrayed that she was going to visit a sick person. But she did not like her errand, and she did not trouble to dissimulate her repugnance. She was almost angry with old Nancy for insisting upon seeing her, when the villagers must all have known perfectly well how much she objected to taking part in death-bed scenes. If it had not been for Miss Whimper's gentle exertion of authority she would probably have declined the visit altogether. As it was, she had postponed it upon one pretext and another until the afternoon, although the old woman had summoned her many hours before.

"It's all very well for auntie," she thought, as she strolled moodily along. "Of course her father was the clergyman here, and she knows what to do for sick people, and doesn't mind stuffy rooms. Oh, bother!"

The last exclamation was elicited by the appearance of a young man with a gun over his shoulder. The new arrival was tall, strong, and rather handsome; his good looks, however, being somewhat marred by an indefinable air of clumsiness that pervaded his whole person, from his black whiskers to his ill-fitting knickerbockers.

"Where are you going?" began Beatrice sharply, without any previous form of greeting.

"Well, I was going out just to see if I could pick up a rabbit or two," replied the young man, in a deprecating voice. "It seemed a pity to waste such a fine day. But if there is anything I can do——"

"Oh, I wouldn't detain you for worlds!" interrupted the girl. "Especially when you have devised such an original mode of occupying yourself. Let me see—how many days this week have you worried the rabbits?"

"Well, I have been after them several times lately," he admitted.

"But really I should like to come with you and carry your basket. There's nothing I should like better."

"Don't talk so absurdly!" exclaimed Beatrice, jerking away the basket so suddenly that the beef-tea splashed all over the custard-pudding. "Now, your strong point being truthfulness, you had better confess at once that you are longing to get over that gate, and carry out the rest of your humane programme. I am hurrying to see a dying woman, so I am afraid I can't waste any more time talking at present."

This time the young man took his dismissal. Leaving her without a word, he got over the gate, and soon disappeared behind the leafy hedgerows. Beatrice continued her walk with a slightly heightened colour and a perceptibly increased air of annoyance. It would hardly have occurred to a spectator that the two who had just parted so abruptly were engaged to be married. And in that fact lay the whole secret of the girl's unreasonable temper. Until John Cooper made love to her she regarded him with the temperate liking that one extends to the majority of people one has known from childhood. In the capacity of a lover he bored her, and his unornamental virtues jarred on her fastidious taste; but at first unwilling to give pain, she had contented herself with parrying his advances so skilfully as to avert a regular offer. Being endowed with much sharper wits than her admirer, things might have gone on quietly in this way for an indefinite time, if it had not been for the appearance of the new rector's daughters on the scene. Adela and Lily Price were fine young women, with well-defined ideas on the subject of matrimony, and without a moment's delay they proceeded to lay siege to Mr. Cooper's rather susceptible heart. This was more than Beatrice's philosophy could stand. Maddened by the spectacle of her late adorer wavering in his allegiance, she entered the lists with the Prices, and, in an evil moment for herself, won an easy victory, and became John Cooper's promised wife. The transitory enjoyment of witnessing the Prices' mortification when the engagement was given out, was the only pleasure she had yet derived from the affair. The meeting just recorded was a very fair sample of their relations to one another.

In a few minutes Beatrice was knocking at the door of the tumble-down cottage on the outskirts of the village. On entering the room in which the dying woman lay she did not experience any of the involuntary reverence that is awakened in most people by the near approach of death in any form. She was merely conscious of the more repulsive features of the scene—the dusty furniture, and confusion of dirty cups and basins, containing the remnants of past meals, that were scattered about the table. Her first care was to seat herself as far from the bed as possible, whilst an untidy woman, who it appeared was Nancy's daughter, took the basket and unpacked its contents, accompanying the operation with perpetual exclamations of gratitude.

"Mother's been wanting to see you ever so, miss," she began, when the last little delicacy was deposited safely on the table. "There's been some'ut on her mind that's troubled her mortal bad these last days. She couldn't bring herself to name it even to me till near daybreak—well, it might be three o'clock then. She were a-groaning away to herself, and a-clutching at the sheets, and I promised her as how I'd send for you soon as ever the boy had done milking——"

"I know," interrupted Beatrice, "you sent up for me early, but I was busy all the morning. And I do not see what use I am now," she added, glancing towards the motionless figure lying in the corner.

Then ensued a long and involved explanation on the part of the woman, to which Beatrice listened with very slender interest. She did not really at all care to know what Nancy's symptoms had been up to the last, or to learn in detail how, after passing a restless night, the old woman had sunk into a torpor which, according to the doctor, would before long terminate in death. Without being precisely heartless Beatrice had a great dislike to all that appertained to sickness and poverty. If she could have her way all misery would be cured by magic, but she felt no instinctive longing personally to relieve pain, or bring comfort to the afflicted. But suddenly the woman's words arrested her attention—apathy was exchanged for extreme excitement. Beatrice started up and poured out a volley of questions, to which the woman, with the circumlocution of her class, carefully avoided any direct answer.

"Yes! But I don't care to hear what the neighbours said and what you thought!" interrupted Beatrice impatiently. "Repeat to me what you were telling just now about the railway accident and what it is that Nancy knows!" Her cheeks were flaming as she spoke. She felt on the eve of a great discovery.

"Well I never, miss! How you do take on to be sure! And it's no such great matter after all," continued the woman soothingly.

"Make haste then, and tell me all about it your own way," said Beatrice, sinking back on a chair, and mastering her emotion as best she could.

The whole story briefly amounted to this. On the day of the famous accident, Nancy had assisted at the removal of the victims to the inn. It appeared that yielding to a sudden temptation she had appropriated a small parcel out of the pocket of the unfortunate woman who was popularly considered to be Beatrice's nurse. This parcel Nancy had kept by her ever since, a superstitious terror of incurring the resentment of the dead woman having prevented her from making any use of its contents. Now on her death-bed she was stricken with remorse, and full of anxiety to restore the missing property as nearly as possible to its original owner.

"And is that all? Everything you know?" demanded the girl imperiously. "And where are the things your mother stole? give

me my property at once!" she continued in a voice trembling with anger and excitement.

"Lor, miss! How you do speak out, to be sure! Poor mother, there, she never meant to do you a harm, for certain. Any way you'd never go to disturb her when she's just passing away, as quiet as a lamb."

"Give me my property at once," reiterated the girl, "or I will send for some one who will make you!"

Frightened by the awful vagueness of this threat, and with visions of policemen, armed with all the terrors of the law, floating before her eyes, the woman went to the bedside, and tried to remove some object from under the pillow. But the stiffened hand of the dying woman retained its grasp, and it was not until Beatrice, with averted eyes lent her help, that the bony, wrinkled fingers relaxed their hold. A packet about four inches square, folded inside some dirty newspapers, did not seem a great acquisition. Yet Beatrice felt that it contained her fate. She could not wait to return home but tore off the string at once, and turned the contents of the parcel out on the shabby patchwork quilt that lay across the bed. A fine cambric handkerchief, with a beautifully embroidered monogram, three half-crowns, and a tiny gold locket. That was all! The girl simply gasped with astonishment. If the packet had contained a tiara of diamonds or a family pedigree, it would have astonished her far less.

Indeed she had quite expected some such *dénouement* to the scene; some decisive discovery that would entirely alter her whole life.

"Can it be all? There must be something more!" she repeated feverishly, as she turned the little articles over and over in her hands. "Oh, why did I not know sooner!" she broke out passionately. "Nancy could have told me more; she must have found some other traces. I will find out yet. Make your mother speak, can't you!" And she turned angrily on the wondering woman at her side.

"It isn't no manner o' use speaking to mother any more, miss," she replied stolidly. "She's going to glory, she is, and it ain't no use a hindering of her with questions and such like."

But Beatrice was not to be deterred. Overcoming her natural repugnance, she drew back the faded cotton curtain that partially concealed the old woman, and bent over the bed.

"Nancy," she said, in a hard metallic voice, "tell me what you did with the rest of my things? There must have been something more valuable! I will know the truth!"

There was no reply. The old woman lay motionless, her dim eyes half closed. She drew her breath with evident difficulty, and with a low moaning accompaniment. It was obvious, even to one ignorant of such matters, that the end was very near. Then suddenly a great terror fell upon Beatrice, and fearful lest the old woman should die in her very presence, she swept together the little articles on the quilt, and hurried out of the room.

It was impossible to return at once to Rose Cottage and Miss Whimper's kindly scrutiny. There were many things to be thought over; whether to make known the discovery as far as it went, or to keep it a secret for the present, being the principal point that Beatrice was debating feverishly in her own mind. So she turned up a narrow, grassy lane, where she could stroll along as slowly as she pleased, without fear of interruption. But as she turned a corner, all thought was rendered impossible, by the extraordinary medley of sounds that greeted her ear. The yells, howls, and imprecations, interrupted from time to time by the sharp report of a gun, suggested the idea that something of the nature of a South American revolution had broken out in the neighbourhood. Even Beatrice, preoccupied as she was, felt bound to make further investigations. But the first glance through a gap in the hedge, dispelled the illusion that anything approaching a social tragedy was in progress. It was merely one of the farmers cutting his last bit of barley, and, as was customary, all the farm men were assembled with a view to securing the rabbits that had taken refuge in the rapidly-diminishing patch. There was not more than half an acre left standing now, and at every circuit of the machine some poor rabbit, realizing that his sanctuary would shortly cease to exist, made a bold rush for life across the open space that separated him from the friendly shelter of the hedgerow. As each rabbit appeared, it was mobbed by half-a-dozen labourers, and their attendant sheep dogs, the waving of sticks, throwing of stones, and fearful clamour of upraised voices being calculated to bewilder a much bolder animal. But in spite of apparently overpowering odds, many a rabbit would have escaped, if Mr. Cooper had not been standing quietly under the great oak-tree, and rolling them over with a charge of No. 6 shot through their heads, just as the worst of the danger seemed over.

This sight added the last touch to Beatrice's annoyance. Rather unreasonably she ignored the fact that the presence of a gun probably saved many a rabbit from crawling off to die with a broken leg, for though the labourers often succeed in inflicting injuries with their different missiles, it is comparatively seldom that they manage to pick up their victims. But wilfully disregarding this view of the case, she only felt a movement of contempt and disgust for a man who could amuse himself in this fashion. Every moment the excitement grew louder and more furious, as the patch of standing barley diminished in size, until at the last round, as all the rabbits rushed out, rather than be cut to pieces by the machine, the yells became simply frenzied. Then Beatrice turned and hurried home, fearing, if she waited longer, that she might risk another encounter with her lover.

III.

It is difficult to describe the extreme bitterness with which Beatrice brooded over her fate during the next few days. Brought up by Miss Whimper to regard herself as a kind of princess in disguise, she naturally accepted all that the old lady did for her with an undercurrent of feeling that after all she had not received her deserts. Rose Cottage for a home, and John Cooper for a husband, would have done all very well if she had really been Miss Whimper's niece. But under those circumstances she would probably had been a very homely, unornamental little person, the very opposite in fact to what was actually the case. And now she had been on the very verge of discovering the great secret that would have opened to her a new existence, and had been disappointed only by a series of trivial accidents. She was furious with herself for having postponed her visit to Nancy until it was too late, and still more so with the old woman whose original fault had caused all the trouble. Her anger extended in some sort to Miss Whimper, who surely might have made more searching inquiries at the time of the accident. She even felt a certain spite against the dead woman who had been lying for so many years under the green mound in the churchyard. It must have been in some measure owing to her carelessness that there was so little by which to identify the child. In the meantime, a sort of sullen reticence prevented Beatrice from mentioning what had occurred in the cottage. Nancy died without regaining consciousness, and for the present all hope of further revelations seemed at an end.

"Please, ma'am, the schoolmistress has just sent up to say the inspector gentleman has arrived, and would you please come to the school," said the neat maid-servant, entering Miss Whimper's sunny drawing-room a few days later. There was nothing unusual about the announcement, as Miss Whimper had for many years been a sort of self-constituted curate, and nothing of the least importance ever went on in the parish without her presence and sanction. There was always a little friendly rivalry between her and the rector's family, both wishing to entertain the distinguished ecclesiastical visitors, who from time to time came to Blankton in an official capacity. As a rule Miss Whimper quite held her own, for though the Bishop had once dined and slept at the rectory on the occasion of the Church opening, the Archdeacon had quite restored the balance by taking tea at Rose Cottage three years running, before starting to catch his train. School inspectors were a sort of debatable ground.

"Beatrice, my love," said Miss Whimper, after a few moments of anxious thought, "I am exceptionally busy this morning, as Ellen is making the damson jam, and I never can trust her to remove the stones carefully unless I am in and out of the kitchen all the time. Of

course I must go down to the school presently, particularly as I know the Rector has had a touch of bronchitis and is confined to the house. But I wish you would put on your hat and just run down and tell Mr. Grainger that I hope to see him to dinner as usual. No doubt he will be glad to be spared the walk to the Rectory. You can remind him that this is only half the distance."

"Very well; I will do my best to secure you a guest," replied the girl rather mockingly.

The old lady's petty pre-occupations and vanities seemed so ludicrously contemptible compared with the great matters over which she was brooding. However, good Miss Whimper did not detect the shade of irritation in her manner, and trotted off contentedly to superintend the jam making, with the comforting conviction that she had secured the inspector's presence without neglecting her household duties.

It was a very short walk to the school, and even before Beatrice was out of the garden she could hear the merry voices of the children, coming through the open windows of the building. The repeated outbreaks of merriment somewhat surprised her, for the visits of the school inspector were not as a rule the signal for much light-hearted rejoicing amongst the youth of the village. Startled by an exceptionally loud shout of laughter, she waited for a moment in the school porch, trying to gather through the half-open door what was going on inside.

"What! Not recognise Mr. Jorrocks? Never heard of him did you say, children? Well, I wonder what they *do* teach you in these schools!"

This did not seem quite right; neither did the voice sound like that of Mr. Grainger. Beatrice pushed open the door and walked in. The schoolroom presented a very unusual appearance for an examination day. At one end presided the gentleman who had just been addressing the children before she entered. He was about thirty years younger than Mr. Grainger, and a very different-looking person altogether. Very fair and slight, dressed in most unprofessionally cheerful checks, he did not much resemble anybody that Beatrice had ever met. He was seated in an easy attitude on the top of a desk, and was flourishing a bit of chalk with which he had just completed a rude sketch of an animated hunting scene on the blackboard. The children were naturally looking on at this performance with unmitigated delight, while the schoolmistress had retired into a corner, divided between amusement and alarm at this astonishing variation on the established routine. As Beatrice entered the room, the stranger composedly slid off the desk, and, advancing with a sweet smile, introduced himself to her.

"I am afraid you will be disappointed at not finding my friend Mr. Grainger here," he began in a singularly soft voice. "The fact is he was upset out of a dog-cart just as he was starting to drive here

this morning. Nothing serious, you know, but the doctor said he had better lie still for a day or two. And I came on here as fast as I could so that he shouldn't worry about the inspection."

"Oh, I see," said Beatrice, rather vaguely, as she stared at the outlines on the blackboard.

"An object lesson," murmured the young man, following the direction of her eyes.

"Ah, yes. Of course!" The explanation was satisfactory enough on the surface, though it would scarcely bear close investigation. "I came," continued Beatrice shyly, "with a message from Miss Whimper, asking Mr. Grainger to come to luncheon with her as usual; but if he is not here—perhaps I am interrupting?"

"Not at all. I have just finished," said the stranger, putting down the piece of chalk carefully on the desk, and folding his hands.

There was rather an awkward pause. Beatrice was debating whether she ought to extend her aunt's invitation to the deputy inspector or not. Finally, after another glance at the young man, she decided in the affirmative. Mr. Grainger's successor accepted the invitation with alacrity. Moreover, it appeared that he had no wish to prolong the examination at present, but was quite willing to retire to Rose Cottage that very instant.

"Then I suppose we shall recommence the examination earlier than usual in the afternoon," suggested the schoolmistress.

"Well, I don't know—I have a long way to drive before dark," replied the stranger dubiously. "It's all been very satisfactory so far—all except the cricket pitch outside. That's execrable, it'll want a lot of rolling next spring. Will you remember to mention it to the person who looks after the ground. They will never get boys to play properly unless they are more careful. You can tell them I said so." He then cheerfully dismissed the children to play, leaving the poor schoolmistress totally aghast at the irregularity of the proceedings.

"Have you been inspecting schools for many years?" inquired Miss Whimper, when she had got over the first surprise of receiving a stranger in the place of her old acquaintance.

"Oh dear no. What made you think so?" replied the young man, sinking luxuriously into a low chair by the drawing-room window, that commanded a pretty view under the rose-wreathed verandah, across the rich valley to the distant hills beyond. "It's very odd," he continued in a contemplative voice, "but all this morning people have insisted upon mistaking me for a school inspector. It never happened before that I can remember."

"But surely you have come in Mr. Grainger's place? No? But who are you then?" exclaimed the old lady in accents of considerable anxiety, as a complete series of dreadful burglar stories began to float through her brain.

After a moment's enjoyment of the situation, the young man took pity on her embarrassment. He then explained in great detail how

his acquaintance with the school inspector dated from two years back, when they had stayed in the same house. Since then they had occasionally met in London.

"Then this morning," he concluded, "I happened to be passing just as poor Grainger was upset, and finding how worried he was at the idea of not keeping his appointment, I offered to drive round by Blankton and leave a message. So I sent my man to put up the horse at the inn for a couple of hours, whilst I went straight to the school. And there they all insisted upon it that I came in the interests of education, so it seemed a pity to disappoint them, and I did my best."

This was said with such an air of persevering humility that Miss Whimper was quite touched. "Very kind of you, I'm sure," she said heartily. "And we shall be only too pleased to welcome any friend of Mr. Grainger's, especially one who has taken so much trouble on our account. You will excuse me if I leave you for a short time as I find myself unusually busy this morning. My niece will entertain you."

The young man expressed his perfect willingness to fall in with this arrangement, and in fact jumped up to open the door for Miss Whimper with an alacrity that rather suggested the idea that her retirement did not strike him in the light of an unmixed evil.

Hitherto Beatrice's acquaintances had belonged exclusively to one type; good old-fashioned people with a perfect horror of even the most innocent modern innovations. They were wont to take life very literally and to attach great importance to all manner of small social functions. Their interests were mainly bounded by Blankton, or at the furthest extended to the sayings and doings of the county town. It was a revelation to her to listen to this stranger, as he rattled on in a light-hearted way, touching in turn upon every topic that occurred to him. He had been round the world it seemed; killed salmon in Norway, enjoyed a tiger hunt in India, and unsuccessfully pursued grizzly bears over the Rocky Mountains. So much travelling in outlandish parts must, she concluded, have undermined his moral sense, for his exaggerations she soon perceived verged upon downright falsehoods. Many of the most excellent practical jokes he recounted to her with pride turned upon a distinct misrepresentation of facts, and it seemed probable on reflection that his behaviour in the school had not been altogether devoid of malice. She was rather shocked, and more than half ashamed of herself, for feeling amused by these audacious fictions.

About an hour had passed in this way when Miss Whimper's head appeared round the door.

"Come here, Beatrice my love; I want you for a moment!" she cried, her little wrinkled face surrounded by its grey curls positively twitching with excitement. "What do you think!" she continued in an agitated whisper, as she drew the girl out into the passage

"Only fancy who that young man we mistook for a school inspector really is! The Honourable Reginald Lemayne! The gardener met his groom just now down in the village, and——"

"Hush!" interrupted Beatrice, pointing to the half-closed door behind her. Secretly she was just as excited as Miss Whimper by this bit of news, but she would have scorned to betray it. "I had better go back," she said, "it will seem strange if we stay out here talking."

"Oh, wait one moment longer!" implored the old lady, catching at her dress to detain her. "If I had known who was coming, of course I should have made some little preparation. There are boiled rabbits for dinner, those John Cooper brought the other day. So kind of him! And a damson tart. I suppose it will do, won't it?"

"Oh yes, I suppose so!" muttered Beatrice impatiently, the mention of her lover's characteristically commonplace offering having awakened a train of unpleasant memories. "I don't imagine Honourables are necessarily greedier than other people, and of course nobody can expect elegance here!" she concluded bitterly.

Fortunately, Miss Whimper was spared the pain of hearing this parting sneer, as she was completely absorbed in calculating whether there was time before dinner to get the best china out of the store-room.

It was greatly to Beatrice's credit that she contrived to retain the same composure on returning to the drawing-room with which she had left it. Nothing in her manner betrayed any consciousness of change, and yet she regarded the young man quite differently since she had heard Miss Whimper's news. It was easy to determine now that his eccentricities of dress and speech were in some mysterious way the results of his aristocratic birth. His small, fair features and pale eyelashes, which had at first struck her as a trifle insignificant, now seemed so many evidences of good breeding. She no longer felt any doubt about the genuine wit of his stories, and one instinctively allows the son of the local lord more latitude, even in matters of veracity, than one would a bank clerk.

The dinner was an unqualified success. The Honourable Reginald was a fourth son, and not at all proud. His chief visible means of subsistence was the hospitality of a large circle of friends, and it was quite natural to him to make himself at home wherever he went. He ate largely of the boiled rabbits and the damson tart—indeed, according to his own account, they were precisely the viands to which he was most attached. Miss Whimper was charmed with her guest, and not a little gratified to find that grand people were easier to get on with than the majority of village neighbours. She soon lost all sense of constraint and freely admitted Mr. Lemayne to her most secret thoughts and aspirations regarding her poultry, pigs, and garden. Beatrice made some futile attempts to stop the old lady's eloquence, but presently gave it up in despair, consoling herself however with

the reflection that she had already made the nominal nature of her relationship to Miss Whimper quite clear to the visitor.

Just as dinner was at an end a trifling accident changed the whole course of conversation. On returning from Nancy's cottage, Beatrice had taken the tiny locket out of the packet, and fastened it to her watch-chain, trusting to its insignificance to escape Miss Whimper's notice. This little locket now happened to become detached and fell to the ground as she was leaving the dining-room.

"You must have broken the fastening," observed Mr. Lemayne, as he good-naturedly restored it to her after a prolonged search under the table. "Here, let me see if I can mend it, I'm very good at that sort of thing. Now that's rather curious," he continued, walking close to the large drawing-room window in order to get a better light. "I know two other lockets exactly like this. They belong to my cousins the Hethringtons, and I believe they have had them ever since they were children. The enamel is all knocked off theirs, I should think they have worn them much oftener, but they are exactly the same pattern."

"But where did they get them," gasped Beatrice, in a choking voice, as she stretched out her hand for the locket.

"Oh, I don't know anything about that, and after all it is not an uncommon pattern," replied Mr. Lemayne carelessly. "I daresay their mother, Lady Caroline, brought them from Geneva; she was a great deal abroad before Mr. Hethrington's death. I know she once brought me an enamelled pin when I was a small boy. About the only present she ever did give me too, although she is my godmother!"

"Are you talking of Lady Caroline Hethrington?" interrupted Miss Whimper, who now bustled into the room, having stayed behind to lock up the wine in the sideboard. "Why, I remember seeing Lady Caroline at a flower-show nearly forty years ago," she continued. "She was a bride in those days, and I shall never forget how well she looked in a pale blue satin gown and white lace shawl. Such a pretty smile as she had too! I remember thinking that she looked quite fairy-like."

Mr. Lemayne appeared highly tickled by this idea. "My aunt isn't at all like that now," he remarked; "but then I don't know what she might be in blue satin. And as for her smile, she isn't what I call precisely a gay companion."

"Indeed! I trust Lady Caroline does not suffer from ill-health?" inquired Miss Whimper anxiously.

"Well, yes. Something on the nerves I fancy. She had a bad shock once," continued Mr. Lemayne, with the air of one who magnanimously advances a trivial excuse to cloak another's weakness. "Her youngest little girl died whilst she and Mr. Hethrington were abroad, and I suppose she has never got over it. But I think she might try more than she does."

Miss Whimper was full of concern and sympathy. "Poor Lady Caroline! No wonder! So very sad! And what illness was it that deprived her of her darling child?"

"Well, I really don't know," returned Mr. Lemayne rather absently, as he compared his watch with the clock. "I fancy it was an accident—she was burnt, or drowned, or something. But it is so long ago I really remember nothing about Beatrice's death myself. Only it is a family tradition that my aunt is still mourning over her. I think myself her melancholy is due to suppressed gout as much as anything else. But really I must be saying good-bye now, for I ordered the dog-cart to be ready at two o'clock."

As in a dream Beatrice returned his friendly clasp of the hand, and watched him stroll down the garden path. She was roused from her reverie by Miss Whimper who naturally felt it incumbent on her to talk over the wonderful events of the day before she attended to the washing up of the best china.

IV.

That evening there was a stormy scene at Rose Cottage, such a scene as had never before been witnessed in that idyllic little retreat. John Cooper had walked across the village to spend an hour at the Cottage, as he often did on fine evenings. Miss Whimper, only too glad to secure a fresh listener, began to dilate afresh on Mr. Lemayne's charms. Probably he would have borne this panegyric with patience, if it had not been for the fact that he suspected Beatrice's unusual silence to be in some way connected with the stranger.

"Oh, I know young Lemayne well enough," he broke out at last. "I was up at Oxford with him—a silly young fool he was too——"

"Really! And you are such a competent judge," sneered Beatrice.

"Well, if that's the kind of man you profess to admire, I'm afraid I shan't satisfy you," returned Mr. Cooper sulkily.

"Exactly! I arrived at that conclusion some time ago," rejoined Beatrice, seizing the opportunity to bring about the inevitable explanation. "And I think it will save a good deal of trouble if, for the future, we consider ourselves quite independent of each other," she continued. "Our paths will lie in different directions, for I have at last discovered my true family!"

It would be difficult to depict Miss Whimper's mixture of excitement, curiosity, and terror at this dramatic announcement. As for Mr. Cooper, he stood rooted to the ground, almost believing that Beatrice had taken leave of her senses. When she had finished a detailed account of all the circumstances that led her to the conclusion that she was really Lady Caroline's missing daughter, he made a great effort to command his emotion and speak calmly.

"And suppose you turned out to be Miss Hethrington," he began,

"mind, I don't consider it proved yet—there are many things to be explained first—but supposing, for the sake of argument, that you are Lady Caroline's daughter, do you mean to leave one who has been more than a mother to you without a moment's thought? You talk about different paths——"

"Well," interrupted Beatrice, with a little laugh, "nobody, I imagine, would expect me to go on living here when I find that Hethrington Park is my real home. Of course Miss Whimper has been very kind in keeping me for so long, but I couldn't think of being a burden to her for ever. It would be unreasonable, quite absurd!" she concluded, glancing round the low, old-fashioned room as if contrasting it mentally with the lofty saloons which in future would be her destination.

John Cooper uttered an inarticulate cry of rage. "I can forgive you everything you have done to me!" he exclaimed violently. "But I shall never forgive you for the way you have treated Miss Whimper. Never, so long as I live!" And he strode out of the room, slamming the door noisily behind him.

Poor Miss Whimper was so bewildered and upset that she very imperfectly understood what was going on around her. She only dimly comprehended that there had been a quarrel between the young people, and that her pet scheme for their union was in imminent danger. It was a long time before Beatrice could convince her that it was best for all parties concerned to give John Cooper his dismissal at once.

"But, my dear," pleaded the old lady, "do consider what an excellent young man he is, so thoroughly steady and kindly. Just remember what a comfort he was to his poor mother during all those years she was paralysed."

Beatrice smiled scornfully. These were not the type of virtues that appealed to her. John's filial piety was quite obscured from her eyes by his badly-fitting country-made clothes.

"And then," continued Miss Whimper, trying another argument, "he is really very comfortably off, you know. Quite a nice little property and as good a house as you could wish for, though of course not grand, to say nothing of his mother's money, which must have come to several thousands. And though his tastes are so simple you must remember he was at an excellent school as well as the university—though, to be sure, he didn't do much there. Still, he has had as great advantages as any young man——"

"Yes, and now he deliberately elects to live almost like the farmers," interrupted Beatrice. "Fancy sinking into a condition when shooting a few rabbits, or playing in a village cricket match is one's sole idea of amusement. You see how different a man is when he has been about the world. Mr. Lemayne, for instance. You must have noticed yourself. But please let me hear no more about it. My mind is quite made up."

Miss Whimper abandoned her advocacy of John's claims with great reluctance, returning to the subject day after day with arguments that merely served to aggravate without bringing conviction. The match had been her favourite dream for some years, and however brilliant Beatrice's prospects might be in the future it seemed difficult to improve upon the felicitous fate that she had destined for her adopted child. Besides, although Miss Whimper had constantly asserted her belief in Beatrice's lofty parentage, it was a very different thing to maintain a vague theory of this kind, and to absolutely believe that the girl she had known so long was the daughter of a local magnate, living only the other side of the county. These brilliant prospects seemed somewhat illusory to the old lady, whilst the marriage with John Cooper was a very substantial fact.

However, Beatrice was troubled by no doubts and misgivings. An infallible instinct, as she considered, drew her towards her rightful sphere. She remembered with satisfaction what a preference she had always felt for expensive and luxurious surroundings, a preference so natural in Lady Caroline's daughter. But before entering into her heritage there were several practical steps to be taken. After much anxious deliberation she wrote a long statement of her case to Lady Caroline. She did not actually lay claim to being the missing child, but she described the locket and the beautifully embroidered linen at great length; adding all that could be remembered about the deceased nurse's appearance, and concluded by begging Lady Caroline to throw any light she could upon the subject. A week elapsed without any reply to the letter—a week that to Beatrice seemed like years. What that week was to Miss Whimper can only be guessed; but the old lady bore up as best she could, trying to feel that she must not weigh her own personal grief against the child's happiness.

At last a morning came when Beatrice, with flushed cheeks and trembling hands, tore open the long-expected letter.

"It is all settled!" she exclaimed, with a little shriek of irrepressible excitement. "I am to go to Hethrington at once, this very day! I suppose even John Cooper will believe in me now!" she added triumphantly.

It seemed almost too good to be true after so much doubt and anxiety. Even Beatrice, with all her boundless self-confidence, had scarcely expected to be received at once, without any further difficulties. But Lady Caroline's letter, though short, was explicit. The few words in which she said that nothing could exceed her interest in Beatrice's statements, although they had awakened a train of cruel memories that had temporarily prostrated her, seemed the sweetest the girl had ever read. The writer continued to say that she had been compelled to make some indispensable inquiries that had occasioned a little delay, but that if Beatrice could start that day by the train indicated, she should be met at the station, and driven to Hethrington

Park, where all could be explained to her. It was abundantly evident that the writer of the letter was labouring under great excitement, and Beatrice's heart yearned to reciprocate her unknown mother's affection.

Miss Whimper contrived to smile through her tears as she helped the eager girl to pack for the journey. Beatrice made a careful selection of clothes in which to appear for the first time among her relations. She was particularly anxious to make a favourable impression, and that could not fail to be the case, she thought, as she stood looking at her eminently satisfactory reflection in the glass, until the maid had twice tapped at the door to tell her the fly was waiting. When she came down, Miss Whimper was standing on the doorstep, with her little wrinkled face puckered up, in a brave determination not to weep.

"Good-bye!" cried Beatrice lightly, as she bestowed a rapid kiss on the old lady's forehead. "I'm afraid I am rather late! Did you see that all the luggage was put in? I can send for more clothes if I want them, you know, when I get there. Oh yes, of course I shall write to you often! There! Good-bye again. I shall really miss my train."

Still Miss Whimper held her hand, gazing up earnestly at the fair young face that for so long had been the object of all her cares.

"My child," she began, in a trembling voice, "you will not forget me when you get amongst your grand friends? I shall see you sometimes, and know what you are doing?"

Beatrice only smiled, a convenient form of reply as it commits one to nothing. She did not think it very probable that she would see much of Miss Whimper at Hethrington Park, but she could not explain that to the old lady, who would doubtless gradually discover what was involved by her altered circumstances. So gently withdrawing her hand, she jumped into the fly, and with a merry nod drove away. As Miss Whimper turned back to the house she looked a very old lady indeed, and it was a long time before she roused herself sufficiently to set off on one of the charitable errands in which she usually delighted.

Hethrington Park was quite a show place, and Beatrice felt a thrill of possessive pride in its palatial appearance, as she looked at the huge porch, supported on massive marble pillars, through the magnificent avenue by which it was approached. She was far too full of glorious anticipations to feel shy, or anything but gratified by the novelty of the position. The well-appointed brougham by which she was met, and the pompous footman who ushered her into the house, were the welcome foretastes of a life of luxurious gaiety. When presently left alone in a comfortable room, which however was rather less handsomely furnished than might have been expected, Beatrice collected her thoughts for the supreme moment. Would her mother, or those unknown sisters about whom she had often speculated in

vain, be the first to greet her? When would she see Mr. Lemayne again, and would he really be as pleased as she liked to imagine at finding in her a connection? At all events it could not fail to be a great satisfaction to her family to find that she was in every way qualified to do them credit.

In the midst of these reflections the door was thrown noisily open, and an elderly female rushed forward with outstretched arms. Beatrice had just time to notice an obviously dyed purple-silk dress, surmounted by a stout, red face, advancing upon her, when she found herself literally engulfed in an oppressively warm embrace. She felt bewildered, and a strong odour of onions emanating from the wearer of the purple silk added to her discomfort. In silent astonishment she endured three separate hugs, each one more stifling and prolonged than its predecessor, before this energetic lady saw fit to desist, and, holding the girl at arms' length, contemplated her critically.

"Lady Caroline," faltered Beatrice, uncertain how to proceed.

"Oh, Lady Caroline isn't here yet; she's gone out for her drive with the young ladies," said the stout female, sinking into an armchair, and mopping her face with her handkerchief. "But she left a message that she wanted to see you as soon as she came back."

"But who are you then, if you are not Lady Caroline?" gasped Beatrice.

This question appeared to strike the stout woman as exceedingly humorous. "Me Lady Caroline indeed!" she chuckled. "Well, that is a good 'un!" And her red face creased all over with keen enjoyment of the joke. "No, my girl, I'm not Lady Caroline, or Lady Anybody, but plain Mrs. Hall, your aunt."

"My aunt!" exclaimed Beatrice with a start, as if she had stepped on an adder. "I suppose this is some sort of joke," she continued stiffly.

"Bless me! I remember now Lady Caroline said she hadn't told you anything," said Mrs. Hall good-temperedly. "She thought I should like to tell you all about it myself, so no wonder you don't rightly understand. Well, you see, my sister Jane was nurse to Lady Caroline's children, until the youngest, poor little Miss Beatrice, was killed falling out of a swing, and the other young ladies had a governess. Poor Jane! she was cut up about that child's death, to be sure. And she was ill in bed herself at the time with a chill, which made her take on the worse with feeling it might not have happened if she had been about. And Lady Caroline away in foreign parts and all! So then after a while Jane married young Jones the blacksmith, though he was years younger than herself, and only after her bit of money. But there! he was a good-looking lad; you favour him a deal about the eyes and hair, now that I see you in the light. So Jane, she wouldn't listen to a word against him, and they hadn't been married long before he took to drink and lost all his business. I told her how it would be all along," concluded Mrs. Hall

triumphantly. She belonged to the numerous class of persons who would submit cheerfully to considerable personal inconvenience or loss for the pleasure of seeing their own prophecies fulfilled.

"And so things went from bad to worse," continued Mrs. Hall, after a pause. "And at last they were forced to go to America. And after a bit Jones went off in a decline, leaving poor Jane with one child, that she named Beatrice after the little lady that was dead. I wrote to her once, and said if she liked to come home I'd see what I could do for her, but I never had a letter from that day to this. You see the poor creature must have started off without letting us know, feeling a bit ashamed perhaps after all her misfortunes, and all the rest of us having done so well for ourselves."

"Then that woman with the child"—began Beatrice, but the words died away between her lips.

"That was my sister, Jane Jones, and your mother. Yes, poor Jane! to think of her being killed just as she got back to England, and lying in a strange churchyard, without so much as a headstone over her!" said Mrs. Hall with a deep sigh. "Ah well! life's very uncertain, and Jane always was the unlucky one. And then when your letter came to Lady Caroline, she remembered all about her old nurse, and wrote off to me at once to come here and meet you. She said she'd be so glad to see poor Jane's child restored to her friends after all these years, and it was clear you didn't rightly know where to find them although you suspected something of the matter. So her ladyship wrote me all the particulars, and how you had been found dressed in the same clothes as her poor little child used to wear, for she had given my sister whole boxes of them at one time and another, and many a little ornament beside that belonged to the poor young lady. Ah, Jane was a great favourite with them all, that she was! And I'll do my duty by her child, cost what it may!"

So this was the end of all Beatrice's pretensions! She could have laughed aloud, with the bitter laughter that is more hurtful than tears, to think how anxious she had been to exchange Miss Whimper's guardianship for Mrs. Hall's. Her whole life and character had been based upon a false assumption, and those whom she had hitherto snubbed would in future have every right to despise her heartily. Crouched in a corner of the sofa, with her face hidden in her hands, she listened mechanically to Mrs. Hall's lengthy account of her own prosperous career. It appeared that, having saved a tidy sum of money by a happy combination of industry and rigid economy, she had at a mature age captivated the heart of a well-to-do grocer. But in spite of being, as she explained, in very easy circumstances, she preferred still further increasing their joint income by keeping a lodging-house in the town where her husband carried on business. It was with feelings that are simply indescribable that Beatrice discovered that her future prospects would probably include having to wait on the lodgers.

"Not regular hard work, you know," explained Mrs. Hall, "but just carrying trays up and down, and taking the orders. I keep a girl to do all the scrubbing, and there's nothing else that any young person might mind doing. Why, Mary Ann—that's my husband's niece—stays with me for months at a time, during the season, and a great help she is, now that she's got into my ways. I couldn't have left home now if it wasn't for her," she concluded, glancing rather ruefully at the disconsolate figure on the sofa. It was much to be feared that the newly-found relative would prove a very insufficient substitute for Mary Ann.

Suddenly Beatrice made up her mind. "I must return to my old home to-night," she said decidedly, "and I will write to you about my plans."

Mrs. Hall made a very feeble show of opposition. During the last half hour her feelings towards the unknown niece had undergone very considerable modifications. It did not seem probable that this delicate, fastidious girl would be much of an assistance to her, whilst judging by her present style of dress, she would be an expensive guest. If the friends, who had hitherto brought her up in a life of pampered indulgence, cared to continue this prodigal expenditure of money on a penniless orphan, Mrs. Hall determined not to interfere with them.

"Though you can tell anybody who asks that I offered you a home," concluded the good woman. "I wouldn't do less by poor Jane's child, that I wouldn't! and if your friends arn't willing to have you back, just let me know. But mind, my house isn't the place for fine ladies. We all work; I do myself as hard as any of them. What? you want to start off now at once? Why, her ladyship said most particular that we were to wait here in the housekeeper's room until she and the young ladies came back from their drive, they were so anxious to see you, after your letter. I shouldn't like to offend them, that I shouldn't! What with their kindness to poor Jane, and recommending my lodgings as they have done."

But Beatrice was firm. To be introduced to Lady Caroline as Mrs. Hall's niece was more than she could stand. Brushing aside all possible objections, she stated her intention of at once walking back to the station, without even waiting for her luggage, which might follow as it could. The immediate necessity of making her escape from Hethrington Park overpowered all other considerations. Mrs. Hall did not repeat her embrace at parting, and in point of fact experienced a distinct sense of relief at her niece's departure; though she enjoyed telling the housekeeper afterwards how Beatrice looked quite the young lady, and as well-dressed as Miss Hethrington herself.

When safely out of the house, Beatrice fled down the drive as if escaping from some murderous pursuer. Once she was checked in her hurried flight by the sound of approaching wheels, and had only just time to slip behind a gigantic oak-tree, before a waggonette filled with a large and merry party dashed past. Evidently Lady Caroline

was just returning from her drive, and Beatrice recognised with a fresh pang of misery as she cautiously peeped from her hiding-place, that Mr. Lemayne was amongst the noisiest of the merry group, whose laughing voices were heard long after the carriage had disappeared from sight.

One piece of luck befell Beatrice at the close of this disastrous day. She found a train by which to return without having to wait at the station, and, within an hour of parting from Mrs. Hall, she found herself whirling swiftly homeward. During that journey in the dusk of an autumn evening, she had ample time to review her life by the light of the recent disclosures. All at once she perceived the excessive stupidity of that hypercritical spirit which had led her to scorn Miss Whimper's homely ways and little old-fashioned refinements. It was almost intolerable to pursue the same train of thought, and recall the numerous unmerited snubs she had bestowed on poor Mr. Cooper for not being more of a fine gentleman. Her eyes were suddenly opened to his merits now that it was too late. "He will see what my criticisms were worth when he knows about my own refined relations," she thought bitterly; though if she had considered for a moment she would have remembered that John was far too kindly ever to enjoy anybody's discomfiture. But gradually even wounded pride yielded to unalloyed regret for the gross ingratitude that, in one form or another, had always characterised her behaviour to her adopted parent. She vividly remembered, amongst other things, how, when quite a young girl, Miss Whimper had given her the only valuable ring she possessed, and how she had hurt the old lady's feelings by candidly pointing out the hideousness of the heavy setting, that had once been considered so handsome, and insisted upon sending it to the jewellers to be altered. And this was only one out of innumerable similar incidents.

Precisely as the clock struck ten, Miss Whimper was in the habit of folding up her work, and lighting her bedroom candle. This evening, for the first time for many years, she sat on after the appointed time, not working, but gazing mournfully round the empty room. Even her much-prized cabinet of old china looked dull and faded without the light of Beatrice's presence, and the habitual smell of dried lavender and rose-leaves, of which the drawing-room was redolent, seemed to carry with it a suggestion of funeral wreaths. There was a footstep in the verandah outside, a rustling as if the roses across the window were being pushed aside by a passing figure. As a rule Miss Whimper was rather a nervous old lady, but in moments of great emotion ordinary terrors sink into abeyance. She opened the window, and in another moment her lost child was sobbing in her arms.

It took Miss Whimper a long time to convince Beatrice that it was not her duty to expiate her past offences by immediately going out as a governess or a hospital nurse.

"But I never intended to stay—only just to creep back quietly and tell you how sorry I am for having made you wretched!" said the girl feverishly, as she sat on a low stool, resting her head against the old lady's knee, just as she had done twenty years before. "Oh, I can never stay here again! You will be ashamed of me now—now that you know the truth, though you are too kind to say so. Everybody will despise me when they hear who I am and how I have behaved."

"And who will dare to despise my adopted child?" exclaimed Miss Whimper, drawing herself up with a little stately air. "Ah, no!" she continued, her dim eyes shining with the light of love, as she patted the girl's bowed head. "This is your home, until you leave it for your husband's."

"That will never be now," murmured Beatrice, almost inaudibly, as she buried her crimson face in her hands. "He said he would never forgive me the way I behaved to you—and he was right."

"My dear, forgiveness is an easy virtue to practise towards a culprit like you," replied Miss Whimper nodding sagaciously. If there was one thing the old lady prided herself upon understanding better than another, it was a love affair.

ONLY A DREAM.

"I DREAMT that every fair and radiant morn,
When the gay sunshine through my window crept,
No longer sad and aimless and forlorn,
No longer of the joys of life bereft,
I flew to gather by the sapphire light
Sweet dewy roses—cherries blushing red,
And eglantine and jasmine starry white,
Before my love's eyes these delights to spread.
I dreamt—at eve—that in our quiet home
I listened for the step I knew so well,
The step so loth to go—so swift to come;
That there we two the same sweet tale would tell,
The old old story whisper'd o'er and o'er!
Ah, happy time! Ah, dreams of golden hue!"

Unbidden sobs arose—she spoke no more!
"Dear one"—he said—"why that was my dream too!"

C. E. MEETKERKE.

THE MAJOR'S ASTRAL BODY

By G. B. Stuart.

I.

"WELL, Roger, old fellow, I am glad to see you! how are you? you're looking very fit!"

"Thanks, yes, I'm first-rate; the voyage set me up. How jolly it is to meet you again! I declare to you, when I woke up this morning in my old room at the club, I felt as if I'd never been away."

"Oh, London's much the same as ever! When you've discovered whether we turn up our trousers in dry weather or not, and if it's considered most fashionable to believe in everything or nothing at all, you've about exhausted the possibilities of change."

"Cynical, Robert? I never knew you that before. Let's have a look at you; d'you know, you don't seem to me at all the thing."

"Oh, I'm all right," asserted Major Robert in that peculiar voice which really means, "I'm very wrong indeed, and I wonder you didn't notice it sooner."

"Pooh, man! don't tell me—why, you look as if you were the one who had had five years of India, not I. I expect this London life is a desperate racket."

"Indeed, I'm quiet enough. I only go out when—that is where——" he stopped in confusion.

"Where She is likely to be, and when you think you will meet her," finished Major Roger composedly.

"How the dickens did you——"

"My dear fellow, I saw it all in a moment. No, I don't know who she is, or anything about her but what I have said: you are worrying about some girl, it's plain to see, though why you, in your position, should worry about any woman alive passes me! If you were a poor devil in a line regiment like me, you might have some excuse. Now, out with it, at once! Probably by next week I shall be in the same predicament and want to make confidences to you; but, so far, I haven't spoken to a single woman since I landed—though, what lovely pink cheeks they have! Fire away, Robert."

"There's very little to tell," Major Robert said, getting up, and fidgetting about the room as he spoke, putting cigarettes down in front of his cousin, and assuming a generally *dégagé* air, which somehow failed to convince that astute observer. "I've been thinking for a long time that with that big place in the country, and my being an idle man, and so forth, I ought to be thinking of marrying and settling down, and—and I had seen a good deal of Miss Lorrimer, and come to the conclusion we—er—we should do very well together."

"Do you mean little Lesbia Lorrimer?" interrupted his cousin.

"Yes—I forgot you used to know them. By Jove, you wouldn't call her 'little Lesbia' if you could see her now. She's five feet eight, without her high heels, and she has the most exquisitely proportioned——"

"All right—she was only a '*Bachfisch*' when I went out. Well, have you proposed to her?"

"Not exactly—you may see a good deal of a girl in London without finding it so very easy to propose to her—but I hinted to her mother what I was after, and was distinctly encouraged; and I've danced with her, and taken her down to dinner, and called incessantly and drunk tea with her, and met her at places, and made parties to things, and done everything a man can be reasonably expected to do to show which way the wind blows! And I meant to take the very first opportunity of asking her—when this cursed thing came between us!"

"What thing? I needn't repeat your adjective."

"You may, if you like; probably you know more about the intolerable nonsense than I do. She and her mother have taken up with this modern occultism—previous existence, and astral bodies, and all the rest of the tomfoolery—and can think and talk of nothing else; and because a man can't suddenly develop an overwhelming interest in it all, he seems to be of no account whatever with them. It isn't that I haven't tried. I've got all sorts of books and pamphlets about it that I can't understand a word of, and I've tried to sublimise myself—or whatever they call it—by sitting and thinking of nothing, but I always find I fall asleep. We have drifted further apart this last week than I ever could have believed possible after our previous intimacy, and for no better reason than because in a moment of thoughtlessness I told Lesbia that I had too much to do down at Staverton to pay much attention to the cultivation of my astral body. You've no idea how annoyed she was about it."

Major Roger Chancellor had risen suddenly, and taking his cousin Robert by the shoulders, wheeled him round to face the glass over the fireplace: "Are we still as much alike as we used to be, do you think?" he asked, rather irrelevantly.

"Of course we are!" Robert answered, somewhat pettishly, for he was put out at this unexpected interruption of his recital. "When you have got your hair cut like a Christian and your moustache a little shorter, and pointed properly, our creditors won't know us apart."

"A good thing for me. I shall score there, Major Chancellor of Staverton. Now"—resuming his seat—"I want you to let me have my way in something. Run down into the country for a week, and pull yourself together—it doesn't matter much where—only not to Staverton, that would defeat my object. Keep early hours, and don't think about Miss Lorrimer more than you can help. Leave me here at your rooms—it won't be the first time, will it?—and give me

carte blanche to manage the little affair you have confided to me during the few days you are away. I promise you on my honour that Miss Lesbia shall be in her right mind again by the time you return, and the next event on the programme shall be your marriage. Come, say 'Yes'; you look so desperately seedy and upset that I'm going to take no denial."

"I've half a mind to do as you say. I believe a week of quiet, away from all this excitement, would be the making of me. But, I say, Roger, no practical joke or anything of that sort which might offend Les— Miss Lorrimer or her mother."

"Of course not; remember I'm your cousin, and to be depended on, and the Lorrimers are old friends of mine as well as yours" (inwardly adding, "and that little goose Lesbia shall be made to remember it, too!").

"But how about all these?" Major Robert questioned, gathering together a handful of invitation cards from his mantel-piece, and shuffling them into a packet.

"I thought you said you didn't go out much?"

"I told you I only went to places where I was likely to meet Lesbia; all these invitations are to the houses of mutual friends, and the Lorrimers will be there—Mrs. Hardman's dance, the Thornleys' dinner, this coaching affair down to Windsor on Saturday, Lady Castleton's concert, Harrow Speech-day. I don't see how I can get out of all of them, really I don't, Roger."

"Put yourself entirely into my hands and give me the invitations. Why, I know most of these names—the Townleys, the Gores, the Hardmans. You don't mean that they are all still at it, just as they were five years ago? Now take yourself off to some quiet little seaside place and bathe and fish and be idle for a week, and when you come back I promise you Miss Lorrimer shall be very pleased to see you."

And in the end, after much discussion, this is what Major Robert Chancellor consented to do.

II.

"Good evening, Major Chancellor; you seem lost in meditation. Mama and I have been bowing to you for nearly five minutes, and you have been as irresponsive as a Sphinx."

"Good evening, Miss Lorrimer," answered the Major, who, posted at his hostess's back, had been pricking his ears for the announcement of the Lorrimers' name. The young lady looked at him sharply, for he spoke in a tone at once hollow and absent, and without recognising what it was, *she* was aware of a subtle strangeness in his appearance and demeanour.

"I haven't seen you for ages!" she went on, pushing a little further

out of the crowd on Mrs. Hardman's staircase. The beaming lady in mauve velvet who was following her was suddenly diverted from her course by a friend, and Miss Lesbia and the Major were virtually *tête-à-tête* in an embrasure of palms. "It is you, isn't it?" she continued, looking laughingly up at him through the pink twilight of their retreat.

"It is I, if you persist in confounding my empirically determined existence with the conscious and separate abstraction of my thinking self," Chancellor replied.

"Eh? er—I beg your pardon! Mama and I have had such a very tiring day at the Mahatmas' Orphans' Bazaar (by-the-bye, why didn't you come? you promised you would), that I don't feel much inclined for dancing, and I'm not going into that hot room to get my card filled up at once by a pack of tiresome boys who think they are doing me a great favour by asking me to dance. Let us find some conservatory where we can sit down and talk about the books I lent you last week. I'm dying to know if I have converted you, ever so little, to my 'divine philosophy.'"

The Major offered his arm in silence, and proceeded to conduct his companion towards a small excrescence of glass, pink calico, and Chinese lanterns beyond the back drawing-room, only pausing on the way to report to the mauve matron (who encouraged him with cheerful nods of recognition across the crowd) that her daughter preferred sitting out to dancing.

"Don't let her tire herself, Major Chancellor, with too much metaphysical argument; the poor darling has been working for the Mahatmas' Orphans all day, and I don't believe the Grand Llama himself could have been more interested. Take her away and get her some tea or an ice, please, and remember I've ordered the brougham for twelve precisely."

"Yes, dear Lesbia's a very earnest cheelah," she continued to her companion, a puzzled-looking lady of quality, whose startled "Oh really!" betrayed that she had hitherto vaguely associated the term with some variety of the panther tribe.

"Now, Major Chancellor, begin at the beginning and tell me what you have read, and how far I have convinced you since we parted five days ago. You have been nowhere seen since Church Parade on Sunday, and this is Thursday evening; have you been out of town, or studying Madame Kromesky's arguments as I begged you to do?" Miss Lesbia Lorrimer was very pretty, with wide blue-violet eyes; when she turned these upon Major Chancellor in anxious interrogation, that valiant soldier had some difficulty in repressing an answering glance of interest in his own, but with a grasp at his self-control he eliminated all expression from his features and answered solemnly:

"Since I entered on the consideration of Madame Kromesky's method, I could not definitely say what time has elapsed. My ego —what I may call my 'I-ness'—has separated itself from the world

of reality, as you see it, and has cognized only such attributes as emancipate self from dogmatic bounds of existence. Consequent on this position——I beg your pardon, did you wish to move?"

"I think we are sitting in a draught," Miss Lorrimer explained; "so sorry to interrupt you—it is *so* interesting, but I am rather warm, and I fear if I sit there I shall get one of my tiresome throats. Thank you, this is much better. Please go on. You were saying that you had read Madame Kromesky. Didn't you like the bit about the tea-pot that came through the air when she was in the desert and missed her five o'clock tea? I thought that wonderfully convincing."

"I beg your pardon; such phenomena as you refer to are but the fringes and tassels upon the mighty robe of the Absolute; you catch at them as children pull at a flower or a ribbon that attracts their eye, but to the emancipated soul, lost in the common life, such things are mere rot—ahem! I mean mere rudiments. For me they have little weight: the true centre of being lies in the will."

"Oh, of course," interrupted Miss Lorrimer, who was not accustomed to listen patiently to such long sentences from other people; "one knows and feels *that* so intensely in that *willing* game, you know, where two people take you by the elbows and influence you to play the piano or turn up the hearthrug. I never realised how completely matter was subservient to mind as when, one Christmas down in the country, I saw my uncle's curate willed to bite a plush penwiper under the impression that it was a pear. It was the most complete manifestation of subordinated intelligence, and the penwiper was stuffed with sawdust, which made it all the more striking."

"Excuse me; in the higher wisdom, or that apperception of it which is permitted to unfold itself to our consciousness in successive avatars, mind matters little, and matter is quite too unimportant for us to give our mind to."

"Certainly, certainly," Miss Lorrimer spoke hurriedly, and in that tone of agreement which not infrequently betokens complete dissent. "But I hope, Major Chancellor, that there are a few small sublunary matters which may still continue to interest you; there is the Windsor party on Saturday, and Harrow Speech-day next week, both of which I confess I am looking forward to immensely, though I acknowledge they savour somewhat of Archaic legends in the light of these latter days. History and romanticism and old associations are mere bubbles on the surface of absolute philosophy; but our Reggie, you know, is in the Eleven this year, and you promised you would show me where you cut your name on the fourth form window-seat when you were at 'Watson's,' so you mustn't disappoint us, whatever happens."

"My corporeal presence will certainly be with your party," Major Chancellor answered meaningly; "whether or no my idea, my egoity, will be, ahem! disengaged, I cannot predicate; for since I made the Windsor engagement and accepted the Harrow invitation, I am conscious of having entered upon a higher plane of outlook."

"My dear Lesbia, are you there? I am sure the carriage must have come, and I think you had better be getting your cloak, you have had such a long day of it. Why, my dearest, you look quite fagged and pale; haven't you had any refreshments or supper or anything? Major Chancellor, you must get her some soup at once; please bring it to the door of the ladies' cloakroom; Lesbia needs so much building up, now that she is reading and working so hard at her theosophy; you must have been talking very interestingly, you two, to forget the time in this fashion."

Mrs. Lorrimer whisked her daughter downstairs as she continued this string of remarks, Miss Lesbia firmly repudiating the projected beef-tea, under the impression that the bull was a sacred animal whom her present convictions obliged her to respect; and the mother and daughter were packed into their carriage by the Major, who, notwithstanding the comparative earliness of the hour, then lighted a cigar and strolled homewards, leaving Mrs. Hardman's party to run its course without him, letting himself in with a latchkey to the rooms where we first met him in colloquy with his cousin.

"Have you had a pleasant evening, Lesbia? Did Major Chancellor say anything in particular?" Mrs. Lorrimer asked from her corner of the brougham.

"No—yes; that is, we talked theosophy; he speaks very well," Lesbia returned.

"And you enjoyed yourself, dear one?"

"Immensely," replied Miss Lorrimer; but a keen observer might have objected that her tone was that of the distinctly bored.

III.

"Well, Lesbia, home again? What sort of a day have you had?"

"Abominable," Miss Lorrimer answered emphatically, dropping into an armchair opposite her mother's sofa, every line of her figure and fold of her pretty blue-and-white costume showing utter dejection in its unqualified droop.

"Why, what do you mean?" cried Mrs. Lorrimer, struggling into a sitting position, in spite of her lumbago, the better to survey her disconsolate daughter; "you aren't ill, are you? and the weather has been lovely. I've been lying here all day thinking how pretty Harrow must be looking and how disappointed dear Reggie would be when he found I had to give up going and put Aunt Margaret in my place; and now you come home and declare it has all been abominable! Really, Lesbia, that is rather hard upon me, when I only exist to try and give you pleasure. Was Reggie disagreeable, or Aunt Margaret tiresome, or—or what was it? Tell me everything from the beginning."

"There isn't much to tell, only it was all horrid, and I had looked

forward to it as one of the pleasantest days of the season. It was dreadfully hot, and Aunt Margaret never ceased talking, and we had to walk up the hill for the sake of the horses, and you know I never count on having to walk in my French shoes. Then the speeches were stupid and the lunch uncomfortable, and Reggie hardly spoke to us because Blake, his chum, had got his sister down from town, and Blake hung on to us, and bored us about Byron and 'Ducker' and the view, until I wished myself home a hundred times. Oh, it has been such a dismal, wasted day, and I've crumpled my frock, and faded my hat, and rubbed all the skin off my heel, for nothing."

"Didn't Major Chancellor turn up after all?"

"Oh, yes!"—in a very indifferent voice. "He was there all the time; but he has gone so mad over this stupid philosophy, or theosophy, or whatever he calls it, that he might as well have stayed at home for all the addition he was to our enjoyment. I never knew anything so tedious as a man can be when he takes up anything of that sort"—and Miss Lesbia yawned an exhaustive, heart-breaking yawn at the bare thought.

"But, my dear, you yourself urged him to look into the subject, and lent him *Madame Kromesky's Life* to read, and assured him it was of the greatest interest to you. If he has gone in for the subject seriously, it is your own doing."

"I know—of course I am not denying it; but I never meant him to give himself up to it to the exclusion of everything else. He is completely altered in every way. If I had known he was such a weak creature, so unable to cope with a little philosophical research, I should never have mentioned it to him at all. It seems to me that a man is very much more easily upset by a new idea than a woman. Major Chancellor looks different somehow, and has quite a different tone in his voice since he first pooh-poohed the whole affair a fortnight ago. He used to be amusing and complimentary; now he is dull, and brusque, and almost rude. He has forgotten lots of things that used to interest him, and takes no notice of others that used to interest me. He breaks promises, and, driving home this evening, he never spoke a word for an hour and a half on end! Aunt Margaret was very angry, for she declared he was asleep on the front seat of the victoria; but I knew he had voluntarily released his astral body, and only his outer presentment sat in front of us, only I didn't dare tell Aunt Margaret that, for you know how Low Church she is; and it was better to let her think him rude than altogether reprobate. Oh, it has been a horrid time, I can tell you!"

"My poor Lesbia, it must have been. I am so sorry I was not there to help you. But did Major Chancellor tell you he could let loose his astral body at will?"

"He hinted it when we were up in the churchyard, and Blake was hunting for somebody's tombstone. He said he knew by unmistakable symptoms that his astral body was struggling to be unloosed from its

corporeal envelope, and that if he appeared quiescent in the victoria during the drive home I might know it had achieved its escape. I suggested that he had better go back to town by train; but he said 'No, that would not be safe,' as he never knew for certain when his astral body would return; and if it didn't reinhabit him in time at Euston, he might get put away in a shunting-place for the night; but if he was with us, he knew we would send James round to Bury Street with the envelope—his body, you know. Oh, isn't it ridiculous? Luckily it came back all right—that is to say, the astral body got in again just before we reached the Marble Arch, and he came to with a kind of a yawn and a stretch quite naturally. Only, by this time Aunt Margaret wouldn't speak to him, or even allow him to help her down when we got to her door. She thinks him most ungentlemanly, and it is quite impossible to explain the truth."

"Impossible? We should never hear the last of it, and the Witch of Endor would be quoted at us from morning till night. How I wish you had never encouraged the unhappy young man to throw himself into the subject at all! I expect he began it to please you in the first instance, and now can't stop himself."

"I never intended him to look upon it so seriously. The part that interested me was the letters flying through the air, and the willing people, and I liked the idea that if I didn't want to do a thing now, I should have another chance a few hundred years hence, and it would be all for the good of the race, you know; but Major Chancellor says all this is child's play, and quite *infra dig.* in a serious-minded cheelah. He himself has lately entered on a new avatar, and consequently a great deal of his past has been wiped out. He couldn't find his old initials in the fourth form window, though he had spoken only a fortnight ago of being able to lay his hands upon them in the dark. Now he says that he supposes he was at Harrow twenty years ago in some other form. When I said 'Perhaps the fifth form,' he was quite annoyed, and said it was most indecorous to trifle with sacred terms. Indeed I never meant a pun, though Reggie and Blake went off into a stupid roar of laughter. Afterwards he said he was in the shell; but as I hadn't an idea whether he meant that metaphorically or Harrowly, I just took no notice, and conversation rather flagged."

"I should think so, you poor child. It is most extraordinary; the man must be quite unhinged. What a shocking thing! And Staverton such a splendid property, too! Did he mention anything about going to Lady Castleton's to-night?"

"It was mentioned: he said he should not go. After listening to the music of the spheres, he said he thought it was hard upon Miss Gomez, and Lawrence Kellie, and ordinary human performers, to sit in judgment on their art, because art here is nothing but an inessential negation. Besides——" Lesbia stopped abruptly, and began picking up her hat, gloves, and parasol, which on her first entrance she had let fall in various directions.

"Besides what?" inquired her mother.

"Besides, he added that he had just reached an advanced plane of contemplation, which enabled him to see clearly the futility of many things which people in the world thought advisable or desirable; and he was able now to look upon such trifles as society, citizenship, human responsibility, and—and marriage, as entirely beneath the notice of a follower of the True Philosopher. Therefore there was no necessity for him to do anything that anybody expected of him. Oh, I can't talk about it any more! I am tired to death of the whole subject, and must go upstairs and lie down a little before dinner, and try and forget all about it."

"Just give me my writing materials before you go," said her mother. "Poor unhappy young man! I fear his brain is affected; and he has no mother, and Staverton is one of the finest estates in Sussex. I wonder if a word in season might save him even now?" And she began to write a note with great *empressement.*

Lesbia turned to a side-table and selected a magazine, which she carried off to her bed-room. It was noticeable that in her search for *Temple Bar* she displaced several numbers of the *Path*, which fell unheeded to the floor. She had had enough occult philosophy for one day already.

IV.

Major Chancellor sat at breakfast at the rooms in Bury Street on the day after the expedition to Harrow. Mrs. Lorrimer's note was propped up against the tea-pot, and he re-read it between mouthfuls of grilled kidney.

"So they have capitulated," he murmured to himself. "I'm sure I'm awfully glad of it, for I would not have stood out much longer. The whole business has been more of a strain than I ever expected, and I have had no rest for ten days, save that exquisite little nap in the carriage coming home yesterday! Now for a diplomatic answer to Mrs. Lorrimer, and if she accepts my conditions, as I expect she will, I may make my bow. No, by Jove! I must slip off without that parting ceremony; anyway, I may retire in the blessed consciousness of having made everyone happy without their ever knowing how. He dragged an ink-bottle and blotting-book in front of him, recklessly oblivious of the white breakfast-cloth, and began to write.

"My Dear Mrs. Lorrimer (his answer ran),—

"The note which you were good enough to address to me last night has occasioned a tumult of emotion in my mind. I will not hide from you that at one time my dearest desire was to obtain the hand of your daughter." ("Now I shall turn over the page," said the Major, pouring himself out another cup of tea with one hand,

while with the other he vigorously pounded his letter upon the blotter).

"Her interest in theosophistic philosophy led me to study its doctrines, and like herself I am now a convert to them, and am thoroughly conscious of the worthlessness of those trifles which constitute earthly happiness so called. This being the case, you will at once recognise the futility of our referring again to that conversation which you may remember took place between us in the spring, in which I hinted to you of my hopes, and received some encouragement that their realisation would not be distasteful to you; Miss Lorrimer has herself so plainly shown me that the philosophy which she has embraced does not concern itself with marriage, that no man of honour could think of troubling her further on the subject. At the same time, exalted as I feel this mental attitude to be, there are moments when self reasserts itself, and I am tempted to renounce the whole philosophic enterprise (at least till my next avatar, which will occur in four thousand years' time) in the hope of calling your daughter Lesbia my wife, and it is only her steadfast example which upholds me. This being my state of mind, you will not wonder if you see less of me than formerly, both at your house and in society, and with grateful thanks for the motherly tone of your letter (which suggested what might have been),

"I am yours very sincerely,

"R. CHANCELLOR."

"There," said the Major, glancing over this production with approval and putting it into an envelope, "that can go by special messenger, and I can take a look at the *Times*, and just run over my 'Remarks' (I've been spending an awful lot of money running about all over the place after that girl !), and by that time, if I'm not mistaken, I shall have my answer."

At twenty minutes to twelve, Robinson, the Major's man, entered with a note: "Mrs. Lorrimer's groom is waiting for an answer, if you please, sir."

"Tell him he can go;" and as Robinson left the room, the Major chuckled knowingly, though he had not yet opened the envelope. "They shall wait a bit for their final decision; there must be a mighty struggle with the immortal Ego before I yield!"

Mrs. Lorrimer's communication was very short.

"There are some things, dear Major Chancellor, that a parent can with certainty decide for a fondly loved child. If you still feel as you did last spring towards my Lesbia, do not let a false philosophy mislead you, but come to her at once."

Major Chancellor laughed, finished his cheroot and the *Times* in a leisurely Eastern fashion, produced his cheque-book and pass-book, and went into some details of accounts with a *sangfroid* which was surprising in a lately despairing and newly encouraged lover, and

finally strolled out about half-past one o'clock to lunch at his club. On his way thither he stopped at a telegraph office, and sent off two messages; the first was an answer to Mrs. Lorrimer's note, and ran as follows:—

"After terrible struggle self has triumphed. I shall call to see your daughter to-morrow at twelve, but no mention of the philosophy to which we are both apostate must ever be made between us."

The second, which took not a moment to compose, was merely, "Come up at once. Course clear and Lesbia willing," and was directed to Major Robert Chancellor, Prawnend, Sussex.

Lesbia Lorrimer and her lover never alluded by word or sign to the strange "Midsummer madness" which had possessed them both for that week in June when they had both studied the divine philosophy. The nearest approach to an allusion which escaped the young lady —"Why, Robert, you are entirely my own Robert again, not strange and incomprehensible and different as you were during that miserable ——" was stifled in the bud by a well-known process, and the engaged couple proceeded to discuss a far more satisfactory subject, namely, their marriage, which was to be solemnized before the end of the season.

"And I've the jolliest fellow for best man, dearest," asserted the Major—"a cousin of mine, who is coming, ahem! who will be just home from India in time, I hope, to support me; you will like him immensely, and you must find him the very prettiest chief bridesmaid you can think of."

"A cousin; what is his name; is he like you?" Lesbia asked.

"He is Roger Chancellor, and they used to think we were something alike, but you shall see for yourself as soon as he arrives in town;" and when Lesbia is introduced to the newly arrived Indian—a man with a short-cut light beard, evidently a recent acquisition, from the way in which he persistently strokes it—she instantly decides that the "best man" is not in the least like her Robert: "in the same style, perhaps, but not a quarter as handsome!"

THOMAS PARR.

AMONG the illustrious dead who sleep their last sleep in Westminster Abbey lies one whose birth was humble and life obscure, and who assuredly would not have been honoured with burial in the Abbey had he died a century later than he did. His claim to distinction indeed, though almost unrivalled in its way, rested in passive endurance rather than in heroic achievement, and can only excite our wonder without stirring in us any spirit of emulation.

Old Thomas Parr became famous in a somewhat tortoise-like fashion, not by the way he lived, but by the time he lived. He was slow of development, and was a hot-blooded youth when his contemporaries were old men, and a hale hearty man when their sons' grey heads had been laid in the grave.

He was the son of a Shropshire labourer, and was born in the parish of Alderbury in 1483, the last year of Edward the Fourth's reign. Like his father, he was a common labourer, and passed his days "in mire and toiling sweat," hedging, ditching, ploughing or threshing. His biography is related in rhyme by John Taylor, the Water-poet, who wrote it immediately after the old man's death in 1635, and dedicated the verses to King Charles I. He tells us that Thomas lay down with the lamb, and rose with the lark, and thought, with Pythagoras, that no food was wholesomer than green cheese with an onion, which, with coarse bread, commonly formed his simple diet; while for drink he had milk, buttermilk, whey, and water, with a cup of ale or metheglyn on high days. It was however observed of him that he used to eat often, by night as well as by day, and it was recorded as something remarkable, that he ate heartily at midnight shortly before his death. "His physic was good butter, and garlic he esteemed above the rate of Venice treacle." No other physic did Thomas ever swallow, nor did he ever know the soothing delights of tobacco. His brain was untroubled with learning:

> "He ne'er knew history, nor in mind did keep
> Aught but the price of corn, hay, kine and sheep."

The relative prices of things in his lifetime differed greatly from their present values. A barrel of beer, *cask and all*, was sold in 1499 for sixpence, which was also the price of "eighteen great loaves." And we are told that in the year 1557—a year of great plenty—people were willing to exchange a bushel of corn for a pound of candles. Now the candles, we cannot doubt, were very inferior to our modern ones, while the corn was probably equal in quality to that of the present day, and yet no man would now exchange a bushel of corn for less than nine pounds of candles.

It is certain that Thomas can never have worn a starched shirt till he was near a hundred, as it seems that starch was unknown in England till the year 1564, when a Flemish woman brought in its use. About that same year also the first coach ever seen in England was brought from the Netherlands and given as a present to Queen Elizabeth by one William Boonen, a Dutchman, "since which time they have increased with a mischief, to the undoing of the watermen by the multitudes of hackney coaches. But they never swarmed so thick to pester the streets as they do now, till the year 1605, and then the Gunpowder Treason hatched, and the coaches did breed and multiply."

Of all the results attributed to the Gunpowder plot, this is surely one of the most occult and singular.

Thomas Parr lived in an age when the religion of the country changed its form so frequently and so suddenly, that a man had need of a mind like a chameleon to keep abreast of its alteration. For the first fifty years of his life it was Roman Catholic, and all men knew what was necessary to salvation: then came the downfall of the Pope's authority and the substitution of King Harry's, and for twenty years or so Protestantism was the safest form of religion to profess. Another turn of the wheel brought Queen Mary and Papistry again to the top, and it was highly risky for a man to avow himself to be anything but a devout Roman Catholic. No sooner had he accustomed himself to this way of thinking than—hey! presto!—this became dangerous, and it was once more advisable to throw over the Pope and all his works. Truly those were days when it was dangerous to hold with sincerity any opinions whatsoever, and Thomas Parr weathered in safety the storms which wrecked many a more religious man, by reason of troubling himself nothing at all about the course events took.

"He held it safest to be of the religion of the King or Queen that was in being, and his name was never questioned for affirming or denying the King's supremacy. He was not troubled in mind for either the building or the throwing down of abbeys and religious houses, nor did he ever murmur at the manner of prayers, let them be Latin or English. He hath known the time when men were so mad as to kneel down and pray before a stock, a stone, a picture, or a relic of a he or she saint. And he hath lived in a time when men hold Latin to be the language of the Beast, and hate it deadly, because the Pope speaks it, and when they are more afraid to see a white surplice than to wear a white sheet."

He was born, as before stated, in the last year of Edward the Fourth's reign, and he lived to see not only successive kings, but successive dynasties pass away. He saw the House of York give place to the House of Tudor, and that again to the House of Stuart. But little did it matter to Thomas who sat upon the throne:

> "Day found him work, and night allowed him rest,
> Nor did affairs of state his brain molest."

The sluggish stream of his life flowed on through the entire course of eight eventful reigns—Edward V., Richard III., Henry VII., Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, Elizabeth, and James I,—and only ended in the tenth year of Charles I.

There was another life, that of Catharine Countess of Desmond, that ran nearly contemporaneously with that of Thomas Parr and almost rivalled his in length. She married the 13th Earl of Desmond in the reign of Edward IV., and was cut off at the age of one hundred and forty, Lord Leicester tells us, by "*a fever occasioned by a fall from a nut-tree.*" It is recorded of her that "thrice she shed her teeth, which three times came again."

Of Thomas Parr a curious physical peculiarity is mentioned by his chronicler, that—

> "From head to heel, his body had all over
> A quick-set, thick-set, nat'ral hairy cover."

Four portraits of him are said to be extant, one of them in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. The present writer has seen none of them, but they are doubtless all painted when he had become renowned by reason of his amazing age. His biographer says that

> "Though old age his face with wrinkles fill,
> He hath been handsome, and was comely still."

We are told that though he had not the use of his eyes, nor much of his memory, several years before he died, yet he had his hearing and apprehension very well, and was able, even to the hundred and thirtieth year of his age, to do any husbandman's work, even threshing of corn.

Thomas was thirty-five years of age when his father died, leaving him in possession of a lease that had still four years to run. When this expired, he was granted a renewal of it for twenty-one years by "one Lewis Porter, gentleman;" at the end of which time, Lewis having been gathered to his fathers, another lease for a similar term was granted to Thomas by Lewis's son John. When this lease too was run out, Thomas was eighty-one years old, but having just taken to himself a wife, for the first time, he felt himself to be quite a young man, and a third time obtained a renewal of his lease for another twenty-one years from Hugh Porter, grandson of his first landlord.

When this third lease ran out, Thomas being now one hundred and two years old, the landlord (a son of Hugh's, and great-grandson to the original Lewis Porter) refused to give him a further lease for a definite term of years, but consented to let him have a *lease for his life.* This fourth lease was enjoyed by the insatiable Thomas for no less than fifty years.

His first wife lived with him for thirty-two years, and had two children, both of whom died in infancy. It was during her lifetime that Thomas, being convicted of a breach of morality, was "for the

law's satisfaction condemned to do penance in the parish church at Alderbury by standing in a sheet, which he did, being at the time one hundred and five years of age."

After his wife's death in 1595, Thomas remained for ten years a widower, at the end of which time, being still only one hundred and twenty-two years old, he bethought himself of marrying again, and took for his second wife one Jane Adda, a widow, some eighty or ninety years younger than himself. By her he had a son who inherited his longevity and lived to the extraordinary age of one hundred and thirteen, thus affording a probably unique instance of a man, living in the reign of George I. being able to say, "My father was born in the reign of Edward IV., two hundred and thirty-four years ago."

Nor was the tough vitality of the race even then exhausted: this son had a son who lived to be one hundred and nine, and a grandson, Robert Parr, who died at Kinver near Bridgnorth, Shropshire, at the patriarchal age of one hundred and twenty-four, his sister Catherine (great-grand-daughter of old Thomas) dying at Cork, October 1792, at the comparatively early age of one hundred and three. From all which facts it is plain that longevity is greatly a matter of heredity. It is to be wished that a more minute description of Thomas Parr's appearance and build had been left us, that it might be noted if they differed in any remarkable particular from those of other men, and if such differences were also noticeable in his long-lived descendants. The Hindoos assert the signs of longevity to be, among others, long arms and fingers, large teeth, mouth, hands and feet, a short neck and a deep voice. None of these points are alluded to by Dr. Harvey in his account of the *post-mortem* examination he made of the old man's body; but he says that all the vital organs were so healthy that if he had not so entirely changed his mode of life shortly before his death, it is probable he might have lived a good while longer. An aged tree cannot be transplanted with impunity.

His migration came about in this way. The Earl of Arundel had gone to Shropshire to visit some of his manors in that county, and hearing of the existence of this remarkable piece of antiquity he went to see old Thomas. Possibly he was a collector of curiosities and was anxious to acquire so rare a one. The Water-poet relates how that the Earl "in his innate noble and Christian piety took him into his charitable protection, commanding that a litter and two horses should be provided for him, for the more easy carriage of a man so enfeebled and worn with age; also that his son's wife, named Lucy, should likewise attend him and have a horse for her own riding; and to cheer up the old man and make him merry, there was an antic-faced fellow, called John the Fool, that had also a horse for his carriage. These all were brought out of the country to London by easy journeys."

This remarkable journey took place in September 1635, and was little short of miraculous when one thinks of the fatigue inseparable

from it, and of its being undertaken by a man of more than one hundred and fifty years old. Over and above the fatigue, the journey was by no means unattended by actual danger, for the people thronged to see the old man in all the towns he passed through, and at Coventry, in particular, such multitudes came "that those who defended him were quite tired and spent, and the aged man in danger to have been stifled." Even this failed to kill the old man, though doubtless it shook rudely the hourglass of life, and he reached London in safety, "where he was well entertained and accommodated with all things, having all the aforesaid attendants, at the sole charge and cost of his Lordship."

To this change in the manner of his life Dr. Harvey chiefly imputes his death—"for as much as coming out of a clear, thin, and free air, he came into the thick air of London; and after a constant, plain, and homely country diet, he was taken into a splendid family, where he fed high and drank plentifully of the best wines; whereby his lungs were obstructed and the habit of the whole body quite disordered."

And thus what poverty and hardship had failed to do, was quickly accomplished by ease and plenty. Within three months of coming to London the sands of the old man's life ran out. He died on the 15th of November, 1635, aged one hundred and fifty-two years and nine months, and was buried in the Abbey at Westminster.

"Be the day weary, or be the day long,
Soon it will ring to even song."

E. A. King.

THE CURSE OF CONDER.

I.

"The Earl, who a foreign bride hath won,
Shall slay for certain his eldest son;
And the dreadful deed be duly done
The day the first-born is twenty-one."

SO the curse of Conder ran: therefore, for many generations, none but English brides were brought home to reign at Castle Conder. But at last it came to pass—during the life of the eighth earl—that his son, Hugh, Lord Aveling, when travelling through Europe, lost his heart to a lovely German Countess. Very beautiful was the Countess Hilda; albeit somewhat strange and mysterious, living alone, without kith or kin, in her grim old castle in the heart of a German forest. The country-folk said she was a witch, and feared her as such: anyhow (whether her witchcraft lay only in her youth and beauty or in something supernatural) she bewitched Lord Aveling to such a degree, that he braved the family curse and married her. But in so doing his lordship did not deceive his bride: he first told her how the dreadful legend ran: and the Countess Hilda looked at the handsome Englishman and loved him, and in the strength of that love calmly defied Fate. Nevertheless Hugh dared not tell his father what he had done; so, during the life of the old Earl, Hilda lived on in her German home, while her husband spent his time between Germany and Castle Conder. During one of Lord Aveling's visits to England, a little son was born in the gloomy German castle; and Hugh hastened back to his foreign home in mingled joy and dread—joy in his son and heir, and dread that the awful curse might be fulfilled in him. Little Alan inherited all his mother's wonderful beauty; and, in his delight in mother and child, Lord Aveling gradually forgot the terrible doom looming in the future, and gave himself up to the bliss of the present. Hilda never spoke of the curse; and her husband fondly hoped that she had also ceased to think of it—or, if she did, that she had learned to regard it as an old wives' fable.

When Alan was ten years old, the Earl of Conder died; and then at last Earl Hugh was able to bring his beautiful wife and child home to Castle Conder. Every one gave a warm welcome to the lovely Countess, with the exception of Lorenzo, an old Italian astrologer, who had lived at Castle Conder longer than any living person but himself could remember; and who knew the awful secret of the overhanging curse. When the ninth Earl told Lorenzo of his

marriage, the astrologer grew pale and trembled; and sat alone in sorrow for many a day afterwards, murmuring to himself: "Fate is stronger than all things! Fate is stronger than all things!"

But after a while a great friendship grew up between Lorenzo and the Countess Hilda; for the wise old Italian had far more in common with the deeply-read German lady, than he had ever had with generations of handsome but unlearned sons of Conder.

Alan (now Lord Aveling) developed into a bright and beautiful youth beloved by all who knew him; and especially by his father, who cherished him as the apple of his eye. There were no other children, and consequently all the Earl's life was bound up in his only son. So deeply and absorbingly did Lord Conder love his child, that the fulfilment of the curse seemed absolutely impossible; surely Fate herself was powerless against such a love as this! The Countess was very fond of Alan; but her heart's deepest devotion was given to her husband, who in return adored, though he failed to understand her; he was simple and straightforward, more given to sport than to books, and the mysterious and beautiful woman whom he had married was always more or less of a puzzle to him. But there was one other person to whom young Lord Aveling was the very sun and sum of existence; and that was a deformed and half-witted dwarf, who had played with the Earl's son in bygone days, when Alan was living with his mother in the German castle, and Karl's home was a little lodge at the castle gates. Alan was so fond of this poor creature, that the Countess brought the dwarf with them to England to be her son's special servant; and the faithful idiot gave himself body and soul to his young master's service, and would gladly have laid down his life any day to gratify a passing whim of the handsome lordling.

And so life rolled smoothly on at Castle Conder, until Lord Aveling was twenty-one.

II.

Although the Earl of Conder had almost taught himself to laugh at the family curse, he had enough superstition left to induce him to make most careful preparations for his son's twenty-first birthday. He to kill his adored only child? The idea was monstrous—absurd; nevertheless, to make assurance doubly sure, he decided to go away from Conder for Alan's birthday, and not to return until after midnight, when the fatal day would be over, and the danger past for ever. Lord Aveling, of course, had not been told of the doom which overshadowed his young life, and his father never meant him to know anything about it. But the Earl was haunted by a faint dread, that, since he refused to fulfil the cruel decree of Fate, she might employ some other tool to do her hateful bidding, and that Alan might still

meet his death on his twenty-first birthday by the hand of some unknown assassin; therefore Lord Conder gave strict orders that during the tenth of December (Alan's birthday) no one should be permitted to leave Castle Conder, and no one should be allowed to enter its gates; and then the good Earl rode away, feeling that such a love as his for his only child could safely defy even Fate herself. But old Lorenzo shook his head and muttered: "Fate is stronger than all things! Fate is stronger than all things!"

Slowly passed the tenth of December for the Earl of Conder; but every hour found him less melancholy than its predecessor, as it brought him nearer to the time when Alan's birthday would be over, and the terrible curse would have lost its power. The short winter's day drew to a close, and the softly falling snow looked dazzlingly white in the silvery moonlight—far whiter and purer than it had seemed in the feeble glare of noon. The approach of midnight found the Earl riding homewards, full of anxiety as to what might have befallen his beloved son in his absence. He fully trusted all his retainers however; and as they had received his strictest commands that no one should leave or enter Conder during that day on any pretext whatever, he felt sure that danger could hardly have come near to Alan. Great then was his horror, on drawing near to the entrance of the long avenue, to perceive the figure of a man trying to scale the high wall at some distance from the gates. The Earl drew rein, and called to the intruder to stand still, which the latter did for a moment in the shadow of the wall, shouting at the same time a defiant answer; but, on seeing that Lord Conder was coming nearer to him, the stranger again commenced his perilous ascent; and in a panic of fear that this midnight wanderer should prove to be his son's assassin, the Earl took aim and fired. In so doing he bent forwards, and the moonlight fell full upon his face, which was thus revealed to the mysterious intruder, and simultaneously with the Earl's shot, a piercing cry of "*Father!*" rang out on the still night air. Then the unhappy man realised in a flash of anguish that, in spite of all his precautions, the terrible curse had been fulfilled, and in his agony he fell senseless to the ground.

At that moment the village bells chimed the hour of midnight, and Alan's twenty-first birthday was over.

III.

When the Earl of Condor gave such strict injunctions to all his household that no one should leave or enter Castle Conder on that fatal day, he reckoned without his host—that is to say, without his son and heir. Obedience (especially to what he regarded as an arbitrary and meaningless command) did not come easily to a spoiled

child like Lord Aveling. Moreover it chanced that the young man had fixed the evening of the tenth of December for a tryst with his lady-love, the fair Blanche of Belton. For some time past Alan and Blanche had loved each other; but Blanche's father (who knew the dread secret of the Conder curse) refused to give his consent to their betrothal until Alan's twenty-first birthday was over. The young people resented this (to them) inexplicable embargo, and stole a march upon the arbiters of their fate, by a succession of secret meetings in a wood upon the borders of the Belton estate. Thither would Blanche, escorted by a faithful old nurse, frequently repair to meet her handsome lover; and poor Karl, who always followed Lord Aveling upon these (as, indeed, upon all other) occasions, had attached himself to the lovely girl with a devotion only second to that which he bore his young master.

It so happened that the accursed evening of the tenth was one of these trysting times, and Alan swore to himself that nothing should prevent him from keeping his word, and meeting Blanche in the woods of Belton. With the help of his devoted servant—who was as ignorant of the curse and its connection with that day as Lord Aveling himself—Alan managed to escape from Castle Conder without any one's knowing of his design except Karl; for the dwarf had all the cunning of a half-witted person, and succeeded in diverting the attention of the sentinels whilst his master eluded their vigilance. Alan met Blanche and her old nurse as usual; and after spending a happy hour in the Belton woods—happy in spite of the blinding snow and the biting cold because love was there—Alan and Karl retraced their steps, and set their faces towards Castle Conder. But their progress through the deepening snow was so slow, and the miles in consequence seemed so long, that it was growing very late when the fugitives reached the high wall that surrounded Conder. As they were about to scale the wall (Alan first, as was his wont, and Karl in close and faithful attendance), a horseman accosted them; but he was too far off for Lord Aveling to recognise him, and the hot blood of the young nobleman boiled with rage at a stranger's thus daring to interfere with his designs; he was already far later than he intended to be, and his impatience would brook no further delay, so he haughtily answered the unknown traveller, and again attempted to ascend the wall. The horseman took aim and fired; and, as the moonlight fell full upon the rider's face, Alan recognised his father.

But the love which had so blindly followed Alan all his life was not going to fail him now. The faithful dwarf—quick to see everything which affected his beloved master—perceived that master's danger before even Lord Aveling recognised it, and flung himself between Alan's heart and the Earl's pistol. And the Earl's pistol shot Karl dead, but left Alan uninjured.

Great was Lord Conder's joy, on recovering consciousness, to find that his son was saved, and that the devoted dwarf had borne the

curse on his own head, and given his life for his master's. And though Alan grieved sadly and sincerely for his faithful servant and former playfellow, he knew that Karl could have chosen no more blessed fate than to be allowed to die for him whom he had loved so dearly and served so devotedly all his life long.

IV.

So joy reigned once more at Castle Conder, and the young heir's coming-of-age was kept with all due festivity. The betrothal of Alan, Lord Aveling, to Blanche of Belton was formally announced, and all went merry as a marriage-bell. But Lorenzo was old and weary, and had forgotten the power of love; and he could not understand how a half-witted dwarf should have been able, in the strength of a purely unselfish affection, to appease Fate and to bear the curse in his master's stead.

"I cannot comprehend it," muttered the aged astrologer; "for Fate is stronger than all things! Fate is stronger than all things!"

"Except a man's love," answered the Earl.

Years rolled on, bringing children's pattering feet and children's ringing voices to brighten the stately halls of Conder, and to gladden the hearts of the good old Earl and the still beautiful Countess; whilst Lord Aveling and his fair wife, Blanche, grew handsomer and happier as the days passed by. But Lorenzo was old and stricken in years, and knew that at last his long, long life was drawing to a close: and still he pondered on the mystery how the might of a poor fool's love had had power to annul the dreaded curse of Conder. And one day it came to pass (when his end was very near) that the Countess Hilda sat beside the dying astrologer and said to him:

"Lorenzo, if I tell you a secret, will you swear never to reveal it, either to my husband or to any other living soul?"

And Lorenzo swore a great oath that neither to her husband nor to any other living soul would he reveal the secret the Countess of Conder was about to impart to him.

Then the Lady of Conder told her story:

"You know, Lorenzo, that my son Alan was born during one of my husband's visits to England: but he was not my only child. I had twin sons—the elder, a sickly and deformed dwarf; the younger, a beautiful and healthy baby. I was ashamed of the former, and could not bear to think that this hideous scrap of humanity should inherit my handsome husband's title and estates; while the other child—of whose strength and beauty any mother would have been proud—could only receive the portion and take the rank of a second son. Then I remembered the awful curse of Conder; and it suddenly flashed upon me how I could evade the consequences of that dreadful doom; and how I (who had brought this cruel fate

upon my beloved husband) might rescue him from the sorrow thereof. So, entrusting my secret to only one or two of my most faithful servants, I gave the elder child to the wife of one of my lodge-keepers to rear as her own; and presented my beautiful Alan to my husband on his return as his only son. The wretched little dwarf developed into an idiot: and when I left Germany I brought him with me to England, where not a soul except myself was aware of his secret. You, Lorenzo, know the rest. My beloved husband believes that the devotion of the dwarf to Alan was great enough to appease Fate herself: and not for the world would I undeceive him, and let him know that his elder son was indeed slain by his own hand, and that

> "The dreadful deed was duly done,
> The day the first-born was twenty-one."

After hearing this startling recital, Lorenzo was silent for a time; and then murmured to himself:

"I knew it, I knew it; no devotion could appease an inexorable Fate. Fate is stronger than all things! Fate is stronger than all things!"

The Countess smiled her strange, cold smile. "Except a woman's wit," she said.

The old astrologer gazed at her beautiful face for a moment in speechless admiration, and then replied:

> "The hand of relentless Fate shall prove
> A stronger force than a strong man's love;
> There is only one thing can conquer it,
> And that is the might of a woman's wit."

Which is the story of the Curse of Conder.

ELLEN THORNYCROFT FOWLER.

SHE COLOURED THE BRIGHTEST CRIMSON, AND DREW HER HAND HASTILY AWAY.

THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1893.

MR. WARRENNE:

MEDICAL PRACTITIONER.

CHAPTER XIX.

AT LADY JANE'S.

IT was a very gay party at Lady Jane Lockwood's, considering the time of year. Florence looked forward to this party for several reasons. She hoped that at the house of her hostess, it would be impossible for her to experience the kind of neglect that she had undergone on her first appearance after Captain O'Neill's death. And she trusted that Mr. Courtenay would gladly avail himself of the invitation she had playfully given him, and so be brought once more within the sphere of her dangerous charms. She knew that Miss Lockwood was five fathoms deep in love with Lord Thomas Mortimer —of whom honourable mention has been made—and that she had neither eyes nor ears for any other person. Miss Lockwood, therefore, with her golden hair and sleepy hazel eyes, was a very safe person to hold out as an inducement. And Florence, while she studded her fair ringlets with pomegranate blossoms, counted with delight on the triumph of bringing Mr. Courtenay to her feet, until she was launched on a gayer world as mistress of her father's establishment. For that day's news had not yet reached her ears—Lady Jane never read the papers, and Florence, in planning over her dress for the evening, had avoided all morning visitors.

She was quite satisfied with the effect of her dress of scarlet and white gauze—her coiffure was admirable—she was in high beauty again, for she had got over the temporary vexation of Captain O'Neill's suicide, and she pleased herself by thinking, as she looked for the last time in her glass, that had she been more culpable than she was in that affair, there were few men who would not pardon everything to such a form.

As she entered the ball-room, two of her admirers were standing

almost in the doorway—Mr. Roxby and Captain Le Grange—they bowed very coldly in reply to her gracious salutation, and stepped back to let her pass. As they had been exceedingly devoted of late, she was struck by their manner, but attributed it to the general feeling against her. They were poor creatures she knew—and if it were the fashion to censure her, they would follow the fashion.

The Thomason party were never very early, but as soon as they came, Mr. Courtenay sought out Florence.

"Well now, where's Miss Lockwood?" was his first salutation.

"Oh! you *are* come then, Mr. Courtenay," said Florence; "you must wait till after this mazurka to engage Miss Lockwood, for she is dancing now with Lord Thomas Mortimer."

"That young lady in pink—she really is very lovely," said Courtenay, sauntering near the dancers; "will you come and look at them?"

Florence took his arm, and they stood looking on. They danced the next waltz together; after which Courtenay led Florence to a couch where Mademoiselle Mohr and Sir Frederic were sitting.

Sir Frederic rose to make room for Florence.

"I say, Courtenay," he whispered. "Has she heard of the large addition her father has made to her family?"

"I believe not," he replied.

"Ah, it would be a pity to tell her—would not it?"

"Scandalous," said Courtenay.

"I say, I can't get that statue of your cousin out of my head," said Sir Frederic. "I suppose one could not get a copy of it?"

"Not usual," said Courtenay.

"Young Warrenne is going off immediately, is he not?" asked Sir Frederic.

"Yes; I shall miss him. He is a great favourite of mine," said Courtenay.

"Mademoiselle Mohr's *finale* was a perfect triumph to-night," said Sir Frederic.

"Was it? I congratulate you," said Courtenay to Mademoiselle Mohr.

"It is a pretty play," said the singer, "and that makes one's task easier. The audience are in good humour beforehand."

"I trust that you will allow me the honour of dancing with you again," said Sir Frederic.

"You are very good; I believe I shall not dance any more," replied the singer.

"If you relent, remember I am at your service," said Sir Frederic, and he went to seek another partner.

"Don't trust to his recollection, but dance this next set with me," said Courtenay.

"I am always willing to dance with Mr. Courtenay," replied the German.

Ada was coming towards them with Mr. Roxby. She wished her cousin to be her *vis-à-vis*. No one asked Florence to dance. There seemed to be a little difficulty in forming the quadrille, and just at that moment Captain Le Grange came up. It would have seemed perfectly natural that he should have solicited her hand, instead of which he took the vacant seat on the sofa beside her, and began by inquiring, with a great appearance of interest, after her health, which he feared was but indifferent, as she was not dancing.

This sudden interest, so different from his manner when she entered the room, rather surprised her; she replied coldly that she was perfectly well, but that she did not happen to be in the humour to dance this quadrille; she did not admire quadrilles.

"I rejoice to hear it," said her companion. "I feared that the excitement, however pleasurable, of recent events, might have been too much for you."

This speech appeared to Florence to bear only one interpretation. Captain Le Grange was referring to her feelings upon the death of his friend, and was insolent enough to hint that her emotions were pleasurable on that occasion.

She coloured deeply, but commanded her voice sufficiently to say with indifference, that she could hardly imagine her health affected by events in which she had no possible concern.

"Very true," remarked her companion mildly; "the principals are the only parties deeply concerned in such transactions—and possibly, you are extremely fond of children?"

Florence looked at him, but there was nothing in his ghastly countenance that might lead her to suppose that he had been drinking.

"Not particularly fond," she replied, coldly.

"Ah!" said he, in a tone of sympathy; "then my congratulations upon the recent marriage in your family must not include the two cherubs."

"You are under some mistake," said Florence; "my family is so limited in number that I am able to contradict such a report positively—there has been no marriage among my connections."

Captain Le Grange was now in a state approaching to ecstasy; he was actually the first to tell a piece of ill news.

A gleam of vice lit up his evil face.

"You are always in such spirits," he said, laughing faintly. "I dare say it amuses you to contradict it everywhere!"

"You are quite unintelligible this evening," replied Florence, haughtily.

"It is impossible you should not be aware of your father's marriage with Mrs. Lyle, a widow lady with two children, just before he set sail from Calcutta?" said Captain Le Grange. "It is in to-day's paper!"

For an instant her brain reeled—every trace of colour fled from

her face; all her hopes, all her plans of power and triumph, destroyed by the very thought; but she recovered herself in an instant—she had pride enough to nerve her to the effort. She would not give him the gratification of seeing her humbled by this news.

"Some people believe everything they see in the papers," she said, with all the scorn she could throw into her voice and face; "you must permit me to doubt the accuracy of your information."

"Certainly," returned Captain Le Grange, in the most obliging manner. "I am quite sorry—it must be such a pleasure to have a mamma—to say nothing of the little brother and sister! I am sorry for you, indeed—it ought to be true! Roxby seems wonderfully taken with Miss Thomason," pursued Captain Le Grange, changing the subject; "but then, poor fellow, we all know that the fortune is some inducement in his case."

This from Captain Le Grange, himself a notorious fortune-hunter, was almost ludicrous.

"I have observed the same predilection in several of Mr. Roxby's friends," said Florence, struggling against the stupor that seemed to weigh her down, and looking haughtily at Captain Le Grange; "and I have had the pleasure of seeing them thoroughly defeated—a pleasure that I hope frequently to enjoy."

Captain Le Grange was past feeling any confusion; but if he had a retort ready, she did not give him time to use it; she rose and attempted to make her way through the crowd.

"Where are you going?" asked Mr. Courtenay, meeting her, and offering her his arm.

"Anywhere!" she replied, impatiently.

"Let me help you, then," he said: "there's an abominable mob; you will never be able to make your way alone."

He made room for her through the doorway, and led her into a little reading-room beyond the hall.

"Mr. Courtenay, I am ill," she said as she sank into a chair, gasping for breath. "If you could summon my maid without exciting attention, I should be glad. I wish to get upstairs."

She little knew that all her artifices possessed not a tenth part of the attraction that her genuine, unfeigned distress excited in his mind. He threw up the window, and crossed the room to inquire for her maid.

"What's her name?" he asked as he was going out.

"Louise. But stay; I gave her leave to go to the play to-night; I knew the ball would be late; I must do without her."

She sat for some moments in silence, pressing her hand to her forehead; then looking up, she said, eagerly, "But *is* it true?"

"I have no doubt of it," replied Courtenay.

"To suffer me to hear it by chance!" exclaimed Florence, in a tone of indignation.

"A letter from Erlsmede could not reach you till to-morrow,"

said Courtenay. "I am sure Mrs. Creswick would not leave you in the dark longer than could be helped."

"Will you light me that little lamp?" said Florence; "I will try to go upstairs now."

Courtenay lighted it. "Let me say one thing to you," he said, as he gave it into her hand. "You could never have looked on your father's house as your permanent home; and, therefore, the injury, from the sense of which you are now suffering, is at the worst but temporary."

"You are very good," said Florence, holding out her hand, "I hope I shall be very wise to-morrow."

Not the smile, not the glance with which she accompanied her words, had the least power to shake his composure.

He took her hand calmly, and was leading her through the hall, when the front door opened, and Mrs. Creswick stepped into the house.

"You will not announce me, if you please, to-night," she said to the servants who received her; "I see there is a ball going forward. Show me upstairs, and let Miss Reynolds know I shall be glad to see her."

"Miss Reynolds will be all the better for your company," said Mr. Courtenay, advancing.

"Florence, my dear!" cried Mrs. Creswick, affectionately.

"I'm so glad to see you, aunt," said Florence.

"I hoped I should have saved you the pain of learning this news by the papers," said Mrs. Creswick, when they were alone together in Florence's room. "I set off an hour after your father arrived with his wife at Erlsmede. He had no time to write before he left Calcutta, and the match was concluded in such haste, that the mail by which he last wrote could have brought us no hint of his project."

Florence burst into tears—the first she had shed; and these were not of unmixed sorrow for her disappointment; there mingled with them some regrets for the way she had often treated her aunt—her aunt who had been hurrying up to town to soften the keenness of this intelligence.

"Your father was most anxious that I should explain how impossible it was for him to write to you," said Mrs. Creswick; "he was desirous that you should not feel yourself neglected."

"My father has shown himself solicitous for my happiness!" said Florence, flashing up; "I thank him! He will find that I have taken the lesson to heart!"

"I entreat you, my dear, not to show any resentment in your manner," said Mrs. Creswick, earnestly. "My brother had an undoubted right to please himself; and—you do not know your father—he is the last person to bear anything like disrespect!"

"I will school myself, aunt," said Florence, haughtily; "I shall

have time before to-morrow evening, and my manner shall content even you."

"Florence, my love!" said Mrs. Creswick, taking her hands; "you know where to look for support in affliction—not only for consolation, but for help—for help, not only to support the suffering, but to grow wiser under the ordeal. I will leave you, my dear; for there are moments when we are strongest alone."

Mrs. Creswick withdrew, and Florence threw herself on her bed, resolved to lock her heart against all the world—to return hatred for injury; and to affect indifference where resistance was of no avail.

CHAPTER XX.

NEW TIES.

"You will find Mrs. Reynolds a very pleasing young woman, my dear," said Mrs. Creswick, as they were journeying towards Erlsmede the next day; "and her little children are beautiful creatures."

"Does she set up for a beauty herself?" asked Florence.

"She is very pretty," said Mrs. Creswick, with a sigh at the bitterness of her niece's tone.

"What age may she be?"

"About four or five-and-twenty."

"My rival every way!" thought Florence; "young, pretty, and the mistress of my father's house."

Like many of those exquisitely fair women, Florence possessed a great deal of decision and character; she had great powers of endurance, very seldom gave way to tears; was personally courageous; and by no means deficient in intellect. All her bad qualities had been pampered and fostered at school—her artifice, her vanity, her selfishness—but she had a heart, and she was almost sensible of it for the first time, when she felt herself drawn towards her aunt. Mrs. Creswick was some one on whom she could rely—she had never wronged her—never deceived her—and in spite of her own ungracious behaviour, she felt assured of her sympathy in this first trial of her life.

She now arranged her plans of action, and nerved herself to go through the approaching meeting with a resolution which, in a better cause, would have been heroic.

As they neared Erlsmede, Mrs. Creswick pressed her hand.

"I fear for you, my dear," she said in an anxious tone.

"Watch me, aunt," said Florence, calmly. "You will detect nothing in my manner."

"It is so difficult to feign," said Mrs. Creswick.

"Not to me," returned Florence.

Although it was quite dusk when they drove up to the house, there

were two figures walking on the terrace—one, by his height, Florence knew to be Colonel Creswick—the other, she supposed, her father.

They both came directly to the carriage door. Florence got out first, and found herself in her father's arms. He kissed her and led her rapidly across the hall into the drawing-room—the little colonel hopping after them, full of solicitude as to whether "dearest madam was cold, tired, or hungry."

Mrs. Reynolds was seated by the fire. She rose as her husband approached, leading Florence.

"Mrs. Reynolds, let me present my daughter to you," he said.

Florence embraced her with the most natural air in the world.

"I am delighted to see you," said Mrs. Reynolds, in a low, soft voice. "Mr. Reynolds, I really must compliment you on your daughter."

"People will be apt to quarrel with Mr. Reynolds, madam," said the colonel, approaching Mrs. Reynolds; "he has monopolised so much beauty and grace. But I doubt not that some fortunate man will persuade him to divide his treasures."

"Yes, that will be the end of it, I dare say," said Mrs. Reynolds, glancing with a smile at Florence.

Mr. Reynolds did not seem to hear them. He stood with his arm round Florence, gazing earnestly and admiringly at her.

"And this is *little* Florence," he said at last, as if recalling to himself the waxen beauty he had sent over to England at five years of age.

"Surely," thought Mrs. Creswick, "she must be touched by his manner."

Florence *was* touched, though she tried to shake off the feeling.

"I think we shall be encroaching on your dinner-hour, Colonel Creswick," said she. "It is almost six, and Louise is not the most speedy of tirewomen."

"I think we may prevail on the gentlemen to dispense with our toilets to-day," said Mrs. Creswick.

The colonel made a bow almost as low as the cushion of his chair, while he expressed his acquiescence in Mrs. Creswick's suggestion.

When they were seated at table, Florence had time to survey her new-found relatives. Mrs. Reynolds was a graceful-looking young woman, with an olive complexion, and the softest possible dark eyes and hair. She was expensively dressed, and there was a pretty helplessness about her that was very agreeable to gentlemen.

Mr. Reynolds resembled his sister, although his features were more regular; indeed, in his youth he must have been remarkably handsome. But the character of severity which might be sometimes traced in her countenance, was revealed in all its rigour on his. The rigid lines of his firmly-closed mouth, and the determination expressed in his dark brow, gave an air of unpleasing sternness to his face in repose.

Florence was anxious to make out the degree of influence that Mrs. Reynolds had over her father; but she was quite misled if she formed any opinion on the subject from the amount of fondness he might display towards his wife. He avoided systematically all show of emotion, and she would have known how to value his reception of herself, had she been aware of the proportion between his feelings and their expression.

"I must take an early opportunity of calling on Mr. Warrenne," said Mr. Reynolds. "I promised his son that I would do so. And I owe to Dr. Warrenne obligations that I can never repay."

"That dear Dr. Warrenne!" interposed Mrs. Reynolds.

Mr. Reynolds went on to explain that Mrs. Reynolds (then Mrs. Lyle) and her son had been dangerously ill of a fever somewhere up the country, and that Dr. Warrenne had attended them with such unremitting care, that, under Providence, they owed to him the preservation of their lives.

"Very good news for Mr. Warrenne," said Mrs. Creswick.

"And it was not only his skill, though I think him wonderfully clever," said Mrs. Reynolds, "but he was so kind to poor little Edward; he used to sit nursing him in the verandah for hours when he got better, looking at those travelling jugglers with their goats."

"And here come the little ones!" said Mrs. Creswick, as a servant entered, leading two beautiful children. The little girl was dark, like her mother, with chestnut rings of hair curling all over her head, and the warm, sunny complexion of a peach. The boy, still more beautiful, with dark eyes and long golden ringlets. There was no silly fuss with the children. Mrs. Reynolds held out her hand to the boy, and the girl crept up to Mr. Reynolds, and was lifted on his knee. And then the boy struggled away from his mamma, and climbed up on the other knee. Mrs. Reynolds looked much gratified at her husband's fondness for her children—indeed, from the time they appeared, he seemed to see and think of nothing else. He cut an orange for Lucy, and gave Edward some glittering bon-bons on the side of his own plate, and pretended to look another way when the boy stooped and sipped from his full wineglass, while his bright eyes wandered round the table to see if he was observed.

Mrs. Creswick, who perceived that her niece's patience was wearing rather thin, presently rose to leave the room; Mrs. Reynolds, with a child in each hand, leading the way.

"Do you work, Mrs. Reynolds?" asked Mrs. Creswick, drawing towards her her little ebony table with its shaded lamp and working implements.

"No. Do you know my eyes are so bad I don't ever venture to work," said Mrs. Reynolds. "At least, my sight is indifferent: I am always rather afraid of becoming near-sighted."

"That must likewise be a drawback to reading by candle-light," said Mrs. Creswick.

"Yes; but I seldom read. In the morning I have no time, and in the evening there are gentlemen; and then a little music, or perhaps cards."

"You play then," said Mrs. Creswick.

"Yes; I sing to the guitar; I think gentlemen prefer singing. Lucy—Edward, my pet, Harley is waiting; come and kiss mamma, and say good-night to Mrs. Creswick."

The children were dismissed, much to the relief of Florence, who found it difficult to endure the presence of the little usurpers; though it was evident that they were well-trained, obedient children, and beautiful enough to prepossess most persons in their favour.

While Mrs. Creswick and Mrs. Reynolds kept up a desultory conversation together, Florence had time to think over her position and her plans for the future.

She determined (as she had done the first moment she heard the news of her father's marriage) with regard to her position, that it was unbearable; the next thing to be determined was her escape. This was only to be effected through her marriage; and she passed in review the few pretenders to her hand who yet remained constant enough to give her a hope.

Captain Le Grange was too insufferable; she feared that Mr. Roxby had gone over to Miss Thomason, and then he had actually nothing. Mr. Courtenay, he was well off, and had great expectations—but no, he would not do—he was too rigid—too strict; she hoped she might subdue him, but she could not venture to marry him. Perhaps, with a little management, she might secure Lord Thomas Mortimer, if no unlucky chance enlightened her father as to his character. And then she reverted with a sigh to Leonard Warrenne, whose principles, and temper, and intellect, were such as would bear investigation and—who had loved her for herself.

"Where are the children?" asked Mr. Reynolds of his wife, when the gentlemen joined them in the drawing-room.

"Gone to bed this half hour," replied Mrs. Reynolds; "little Edward was quite tired."

"They seem sweet, tractable creatures," said Mrs. Creswick.

"They are not spoiled, Agatha," said Mr. Reynolds.

Florence was recalled from her reverie by the unwonted sound of her aunt's name; she was just thinking that if she became Lady Thomas Mortimer, she would be so fortunate as to take precedence of Mrs. Reynolds, when her father sat down beside her, and said:

"You and I, my dear, have to make acquaintance with each other."

She sat upright, smiled becomingly, and waited to hear what he would say.

"My plan is to go to town for this season," he pursued, "and then to purchase a place in this neighbourhood. I question if London would agree with Mrs. Reynolds's health for any length of time; and the children, also, will be better in the country."

"*They* are to be considered first," thought Florence. "I have only to hope that this season will do my business."

"So that whatever masters you wish to profit by, my dear, I shall gladly furnish you with during the ensuing season. Music and painting, I suppose, you will be anxious to learn; but whatever graver studies you desire to pursue, it will give me pleasure to afford you the opportunity."

"You are all kindness," said Florence, restraining her indignation at being considered as a school-girl.

"With regard to language, now," said Mr. Reynolds; "you are acquainted with French and Italian, of course?"

"Certainly," replied Florence.

"Can you converse fluently in both those languages?" asked her father.

"Not in Italian," said Florence. "I learned as much as the other girls. I know very well how to translate a song."

"Then you have an agreeable pursuit before you," said her father, "in perfecting yourself in that language; it is possible that we may winter in Italy, and then you will find the value of your acquirement."

"I hope before that time," thought Florence, "to be beyond your jurisdiction."

"I daresay you are aware," continued her father, who interpreted the smiling grace of her manner into perfect acquiescence, "that the education we receive at school is valueless compared to that which we give ourselves in after life; yours is now beginning—and I think you are singularly fortunate that you have leisure to form your character and intellect, instead of being compelled thus early to direct your powers to the management of a large establishment."

"Perhaps," said Florence, with the sweetest simplicity, "you had a view, most kindly to my benefit, in your present marriage?"

"That consideration was not without its influence upon my decision," said her father gravely: "a girl placed at the head of a house, occupies a very false position, and is liable to become spoiled by attentions which are paid to her situation and not to herself."

"And no doubt," said Florence, modestly, "Mrs. Reynolds will have the kindness to assist me in forming my plans of study, for I fancied I had done with learning when I left school, and I fear I should be quite awkward in setting about it again."

This was said maliciously, for Florence detected that Mrs. Reynolds had a very common kind of mind, though it was evident that she had some idea of right and wrong, and had done her best in training her children. But Mr. Reynolds did not appear embarrassed by the request.

"Mrs. Reynolds is a mother," he said, "and her children have the first claim upon her care. *I* shall be glad to give you every assistance, and, above all, to put you upon a course of reading which will

strengthen your mind and enlarge your views. In history, for instance, it is scarcely possible but that you have still much to learn."

Poor Florence! in history, except a few names sadly jumbled together in her head, she had *all* to learn; and in everything that related to literature, she was equally uninformed—and she detested study; she always had done so—but now, when she had expected to be launched upon the world, admired and envied, to be calmly told that she had to begin her education. Many and deep were the vows that she breathed to accept the very first man, rich enough and docile enough, who should offer to free her from her bondage. To her infinite relief Mrs. Reynolds was rising to retire; she seized the candle which the polite little Colonel was lighting for her, and hastened to her room—to think and be wretched.

CHAPTER XXI.

"A LITTLE MISTAKE."

About the same time that Miss Reynolds was so suddenly recalled from London to make the acquaintance of her father and his family, Leonard came down to Erlsmede to take leave of his father and sisters, to bid farewell to Mrs. Digby, and to make a few hasty arrangements for his travels.

There was something of solemnity in Mrs. Digby's farewell interview with Leonard. She mentioned to him several improvements which she should wish carried out on her estate in case she did not live to complete them; recommended to him several old pensioners, who though their little income was secured to them would be cheered by a continuance of the kindness she had hitherto shown them, and expressed her conviction that she was resigning her responsibilities into worthy hands. He was much affected by the tone of her parting admonitions; for there was nothing in his disposition of that avarice which forms so leading a feature in the characters of the rising generation: her liberality had enabled him to gratify his warmest wishes in seeing foreign countries; and he sincerely desired that it might be many years before he should be called upon to fill her place.

It has been said that his plans occasioned a good deal of discussion in the village. He little imagined that he was a person of sufficient importance to excite any interest whatever by the apparent mystery of his proceedings; but in the meantime people went on wondering why he had left Mr. Thomason's—on which side the discontent had originated—what he meant to do next—who was to pay for his travels, and other matters with which (it might occur to a bystander) they had nothing at all to do. Mr. Warrenne was so perfectly candid in his

disposition that he would most likely have at once relieved the anxieties of his neighbours respecting his son's prospects, if he had not been restrained by Mrs. Digby's wishes on the subject.

Florence shared in the general curiosity. She had never seriously believed that there was the least probability of a marriage between Leonard and Mrs. Digby, and she felt, though she had no reasonable grounds for her belief, that, somehow or other, his position in life was altered, and that the homage he had once been presumptuous in offering would now be acceptable. Perhaps, she even went so far as to think, in the present disastrous state of her affairs, it might be possible for her to be brought to think of marrying him. She had always preferred him to every one else—her father must of course make her a handsome allowance, though he had so cruelly robbed her of her birthright; they might manage to live very comfortably, and at least she should be delivered from the presence of that odious Mrs. Reynolds and her children.

She was indulging in this reverie on the morning after her arrival at Erlsmede, and had almost forgotten the presence of the obnoxious individuals at the breakfast-table, when she was roused by the soft voice of Mrs. Reynolds saying to little Lucy, as she held out her jewelled hand:

"Shall I trouble you, dear, for the cream jug?"

Florence came to the child's assistance; and Mr. Reynolds said, gravely, to the little girl:

"You should always be on the watch at table, and not suffer your mamma to ask twice for anything."

The child coloured, and Florence felt an undefined sense of awe at her father's manner. He seemed a person who would overlook nothing, and who would exact from all who surrounded him an absolute submission to his will.

"You shall introduce us this morning to Mr. Warrenne and his family," said Mr. Reynolds, addressing her.

"I shall be very happy," returned Florence.

Mr. Warrenne was gone out upon his rounds when the Reynolds party called at his house. Leonard did not appear, and Maud and Alice were obliged to entertain their guests as they best might. Mrs. Reynolds seemed soon to become familiar with Maud. Music was a subject upon which they agreed. Mrs. Reynolds promised to show Maud her guitar, and got up to try the seraphine. This brought Alice forward; she rose to open the instrument, and, at the request of Mrs. Reynolds, she played a sacred air.

Mrs. Reynolds then sat down, and amused herself by trying a few chords upon the keys.

"It is so sweet; do listen, Mr. Reynolds," she said. "I should think now, this was just the sort of music to charm you."

"Do you think you should like such an instrument?" said Mr. Reynolds.

"Oh! I am wild to have one. I declare I could steal yours, my dear Miss Alice, with all the pleasure in the world!"

"You shall find one ready for you in Portman Square," said Mr. Reynolds, without any inflexion of his hard unbending manner.

"A thousand thanks—you are so *very* kind!" returned Mrs. Reynolds, evidently pleased; but so used to be petted and waited upon, that she received such marks of attention as the natural tribute to her charms. "Do you know," she added, "you must not think me rude, but I'm going to take my bonnet off; I do so object to sitting long in a bonnet; and then, my dear Miss Alice, I'm going to beg for another tune."

The bonnet, with its trailing sprig of wild convolvulus, was laid on the table, the gloves thrown beside it, and then Mrs. Reynolds, drawing her chair almost into the fire, and resting her clasped hands on her knee, composed herself alternately to talk and to listen.

"And so your brother is not at home," she said, turning to Maud; "I do so regret it; I hear he is charming. I cannot think who told me so. Was it you, dear Florence?"

"No," replied Florence, coldly, turning towards her stepmother; "I am not aware of having mentioned Mr. Leonard Warrenne."

"It is quite a pity he is going to travel, because he might have sung glees so nicely with us," continued Mrs. Reynolds. "How sweet that movement is; Mozart, I suppose, Miss Alice, and very difficult. What a finished musician you are!"

"I thought as much," said Mr. Reynolds, who had been listening with grave attention.

"You are very lenient with me," said Alice, moving quietly from the instrument. "Music is my one amusement, and therefore it would be strange if I could not play with tolerable ease."

"I declare I have not asked you if you were musical, dear Florence?" said Mrs. Reynolds.

"Oh dear no," replied Florence. "I had always imagined that proficiency in those things was exclusively the province of professional people."

"This young lady," said Mr. Reynolds, looking at Alice, "teaches you that a high degree of excellence can be attained in private life."

Florence dared not reply.

"Now I think, Mrs. Reynolds," said Mr. Reynolds, making a slight movement with his hat, which he carried in his hand.

"This moment," said Mrs. Reynolds, taking her bonnet from Maud. "I'm going, though very unwillingly, I do assure you. That darling seraphine! Do come soon, my dear Miss Warrenne: I long to show you my children."

"And I am so fond of children," said Maud. "I shall be delighted to see them."

"Oh, but perhaps you could come back with me," said Mrs.

Reynolds. "I daresay Mr. Reynolds would not mind waiting a minute while you put on your things."

"It would give me pleasure," said Mr. Reynolds with his usual gravity. "I should like to present the little ones to Miss Warrenne, particularly little Edward, who owes so much to her brother's kindness."

Maud could not but acquiesce in so polite an arrangement. She went upstairs to dress, and hurried down to join her friends. Alice, left to herself, sat down to one of Mozart's Masses.

She had been playing some time without interruption, when the drawing-room door was thrown open by Dinah, with the announcement of "Mr. Scudamore."

Alice left the seraphine, and moved gracefully towards the newcomer without the slightest trace of blindness in her gestures except a trifling movement of her left hand, which served to warn her if there was any furniture in her way.

"How do you do, grandfather?" she said, holding out her beautiful little pink hand; "I hope you have grace enough to be ashamed to look me in the face, after having forgotten these three weeks to bring me my jonquil and hyacinth roots."

Her hand was taken, and at the same moment she coloured the brightest crimson, and drew it hastily away.

"Mr. Scudamore!" she exclaimed.

"A little mistake, Mistress Alice," said Mr. Scudamore, stepping forward, and shaking hands with her cordially; "you got hold of the wrong person;—it was only Dick—that's all!"

The tone in which he pronounced "that's all" was amusing—as if the universe contained nothing that could equal him.

At the same moment her hand was gently taken again—only just touched—and she was led to a chair; while a voice, whose peculiar tone thrilled in her ear, said:

"I see, Miss Warrenne, it is in vain for me to attempt to pass for my father at present."

"This is Alice, you know," said Mr. Scudamore, by way of introduction—"that's Dick. But where the deuce is Queen Maud?"

"I expect her back from the Ferns every minute," said Alice: then, with a sweetness of manner that supplied the place in her of a knowledge of etiquette, she said: "I hope, Captain Scudamore, you have found a chair, for I know you ought not to be standing."

"But, I say," exclaimed Mr. Scudamore, interrupting the thanks which his son seemed to have some difficulty in making audible, "this won't do—the days draw in so quickly now, we shall have it dark before Queen Maud comes back!"

"But, dear grandfather," said Alice, drawing her chair closer to the table, and feeling for her basket of cotton fringe, "I suppose you will allow that even in the dark Maud might cross over from the lodge to our garden-gate without running any great danger."

"Oh! as to that," said Mr. Scudamore, with a disappointed air, "but this owl-light is not what I—eh, Dick?"

Captain Scudamore did not answer. He remained gazing on Alice with an emotion of pity and delight that kept him silent. He had on his first entrance supposed her to be Maud, from her singular beauty, and because he had detected no sign of blindness in her movements. And now, the excessive softness of her complexion, the gentleness of her manner, the sweet tones of her voice, and the touching helplessness of her deprivation, seemed to him to combine all that is most bewitching in woman.

The silence remained unbroken for some minutes, except by the slight sound of the fringe which was weaving rapidly beneath the practised fingers of Alice. The first interruption that occurred was the entrance of Leonard, who, hearing that the Scudamores were below, ran downstairs, hurried into the room, shook hands with the father, congratulated the son (it was his first appearance out of doors), stirred up the fire, transferred Alice and her basket to the sofa, took possession of her chair, and set in for a gossip.

Alice now began to enjoy herself; sitting in the corner weaving quietly, and as she thought unnoticed, she could listen again to that peculiar voice which had so struck her in the few words she had yet heard from Captain Scudamore.

There are very few people who speak in tune, or who have a tolerable quality of voice in speaking; and Alice, as a blind person, was extremely sensitive to the tone of voice; she formed her opinion of people very much from this single particular, and she fancied she could detect feeling and candour in the clear vibrating intonation of Captain Scudamore; not from anything he said, for they were talking on the commonest subjects.

"And how is Mrs. Thorne?" said Leonard.

"Pretty well, considering that she underwent a scene this morning with the rat-catcher. She deposed to his bringing a stock of dead rats with him, and claiming so much a head for his work as if they had perished under his ferrets in our barns."

"A common trick enough," said Leonard, laughing. "How did it end?"

"Oh, it ended of course in paying the fellow his demand and sending him away, and then unburdening her mind to Jack Robins and myself on the growing depravity of the lower classes. I directly undertook to answer for the perfectibility of human nature in general, and rat-catchers in particular; and we three plunged into a course of metaphysics in the wood-yard."

"Ha, there's Queen Maud!" exclaimed Mr. Scudamore, starting up as a clear voice and a rapid step were heard in the hall. "Leonard, stir up the fire; let's have a blaze! Now, Dick, here she is, my boy!"

As he uttered these last words, he threw the door back to its very

furthest extent, met Maud as she reached the threshold, and led her triumphantly into the very middle of the room.

"How very rude you are, grandfather," said Maud, disengaging her hand from Mr. Scudamore. Captain Scudamore rose and bowed. She returned his salutation with a brilliant smile, hoped he was quite recovered, went up to Alice and examined the progress of her fringe, and then, turning to Mr. Scudamore, she desired him to be very entertaining in her absence, for that it was requisite she should go and take off her bonnet.

She was back before any one else could have been, with her shining hair smoothed, her colour heightened by the haste she had made, and her eyes sparkling like jewels by the firelight. She made room for herself between Alice and Mr. Scudamore, leaned back, unfolded her handkerchief, and, after a brief pause, during which she seemed to recover breath after her exertions, she said :

"Now, I am going to tell you all about the little Lyles !"

"First of all, Queen Maud, I am going to tell *you* that we dine here," interrupted Mr. Scudamore.

"Extremely glad, only I took that for granted, so don't put me out," said Maud. "You never did, I suppose, Mr. Scudamore, and I'm sure, Leonard, *you* never did in all your life see such exquisite children !"

"Are you fond of children, Miss Warrenne ?" asked Captain Scudamore.

"Oh, very—at least, pretty ones ; I can't think what ugly children were made for !" said Maud. "And I wonder what keeps papa so late ; have you any idea, Leonard, where he is gone ?"

"To Mrs. Digby's, as usual," replied Leonard.

"I hate that common," said Maud, with energy ; "with not a house to be seen—just the place where accidents always happen, grandfather."

"And such a high-mettled racer as the white horse adds to the probability," said Mr. Scudamore, laughing.

"I wish I could hear his step," returned Maud. "Hark ! I believe there he is ! Now, I wonder whether Karl is in the way to take the horse. I hope they haven't sent him into the village on any of their pottering errands !"

The sound of a horse's hoofs scrambling on the gravel decided her at least to go and see. She darted from the room to the entrance, and presently her voice was heard exchanging scraps of German with Karl, and questioning her father about the length of his ride.

"How would you do for a soldier's wife ?" asked Mr. Scudamore, looking delightedly at her as she re-entered the room, leaning on her father's arm.

Maud, affecting not to hear this question, merely remarked that she believed the dinner was ready. Karl's grotesque head at the door seemed to confirm this suggestion.

"Well, then," said Mr. Scudamore, stepping a little back, as if to give his son an opportunity of offering his arm.

"Eh! what have I done, grandfather?" said Maud; "don't you mean to give me your arm?"

"You termagant!" said Mr. Scudamore, placing her at the head of the table. "I believe you have a pleasure in thwarting me!"

"Far from it, Mr. Scudamore," said Maud, leaning back in her chair; "I am going, or rather, Leonard is going, to send you some soup."

Captain Scudamore, on the other side of her, offered his services.

"No; I think I won't bore you," replied Maud. "Leonard always carves for me when he is at home."

Maud had heard Captain Scudamore's name so often mentioned, that she could not fail to have formed some idea to herself of his appearance. She had most unreasonably associated him in her mind's eye with Mrs. Digby, simply because her father was attending them both at the same time; and had pictured them a couple of nervous invalids, who coddled themselves excessively, spoke in whispers, and looked very yellow. She was not herself more unlike Mrs. Digby than Captain Scudamore to the portrait her fancy had drawn of him. He was decidedly handsomer than his father—more stately in his bearing—more accurate in the sculptured outline of his features. There was something intelligent and serene in the expression of his large blue eyes, and his address was perfectly devoid of affectation. He gave freer expression to his thoughts than is usual with men who have been much about in the world, and was well-informed, without having attended much to literary topics.

"You knew Mrs. Reynolds in India, did you not, Captain Scudamore?" asked Maud.

"Mrs. Lyle I knew very well; I have not seen her since she became Mrs. Reynolds," said Captain Scudamore. "She was a very pleasant woman; but these second marriages——"

"You don't like them!" said Maud, eagerly.

"They are so mortifying to one's vanity," said Captain Scudamore, smiling, "to see a woman take another husband as she would another butler, when the place becomes vacant—the first respectable man whose character answers—one feels it may be one's own case some day; and I was well acquainted with Lyle, who was an excellent fellow."

"He will marry a widow," said Mr. Scudamore, looking very mischievously at Maud, as if he wished her to be made uncomfortable by the assertion; "it is always the way with fellows when they rail against such things!"

Maud nodded her acquiescence; and Leonard exclaimed hastily: "But you have not yet seen *Miss* Reynolds!" and then stopped as abruptly, confused with having made the remark.

"That's a pleasure to come," said Captain Scudamore, turning

quickly towards him as he spoke; "and in the meantime you can tell me what to expect."

"That he can!" said Mr. Scudamore.

"I believe she is thought very handsome," said Leonard, busying himself with the chestnuts on his plate.

Maud and Captain Scudamore smiled; Alice looked uneasy.

"And when do you find yourself in Paris, Master Leonard?" asked Mr. Scudamore

"The day after to-morrow, I hope," said Leonard.

"It is a pity," said Mr. Warrenne, addressing Captain Scudamore, "that, as you have never seen Paris, you could not have arranged to go with my boy."

"I could not afford it," said Captain Scudamore; "that is," he added with a smile, "I could not afford the time. My stay in England being limited, I should grudge losing even a few weeks of my father's company; and I am sure nothing would ever move *him* to Paris."

Maud, who had just risen, and was going out of the room, hand-in-hand with Alice, paused to give Mr. Scudamore a look and smile, which made him follow her just outside the door, and hold her back while he whispered, "Well, now, Queen Maud, what do you think of him?"

"I shall not tell you, grandfather; I shall keep my opinion secret," she answered with a provoking smile.

"Oh, you plague!" returned Mr. Scudamore; "you know what he thinks of you—what everybody must, who sees you!"

"Certainly," replied Maud, with a slight touch of irony in her voice; "you and I, grandfather, have only to be seen to be admired!"

When the sisters were alone in the drawing-room, they sat in silence for some time; at last Alice said, as if to herself, "I wonder whether he will soon see her!"

"Who is to be seen, dear?" asked Maud.

"If Captain Scudamore will see Miss Reynolds," said Alice, colouring deeply as she spoke.

"He will have the honour, sooner or later, of course," said Maud; "all the sooner, because he hears that she is a beauty."

"I don't think she deserves——" said Alice, and then she stopped in confusion.

"The homage of Captain Scudamore?" asked Maud, laughing. "She will have it though, you may depend; she is, as Leonard says, irresistible!"

CHAPTER XXII.

CAPTAIN SCUDAMORE.

"He has done it! I said so! He has been! I saw him go into the Ferns this very minute, bouquet and all!" cried Maud, running in from the garden, all animation, to her sister, who sat by the fire, working. "I knew he would! He dined there yesterday, and this morning, *voila!* She has made short work, sad havoc, with poor Captain Scudamore's heart, in one little evening! I'm so glad, because, you know, I said it would be so!" And Maud took the chair on the other side of the fireplace, drew off her garden-gloves, loosened her shawl, and set to work in good earnest upon some useful fabric which she drew from a basket that stood on the ground beside her.

"You saw him go in then, Maud?" said Alice in a quiet tone.

"I did, by this token, that he was on horseback, and therefore did no credit to my second sight, which depicted him, if you remember, hobbling along with a walking-stick!"

"Did he see you?" asked Alice.

"Not he, my dear; he has no eyes at present, except for one object, and a very handsome object, too, though no friend of ours."

Now it happened that during the three days which had intervened between Maud's prophecy and its fulfilment, Captain Scudamore had managed to spend the best part of each morning with the sisters. He had listened with the most rapt attention to their singing; had helped them to work in their garden—to play with the children from the Ferns—and was always on the watch to render Alice those little cares which her blindness might warrant, though few people stood in less need of them than herself. And it happened that in his conversation, which was unaffected almost to bluntness, he never uttered a disgraceful sentiment—so that, instead of offending his hearers by the overflowing coarseness and selfishness which teems in every word that most young men utter, he gave people the impression, quite unconsciously on his part, of being an honest man.

Therefore the sisters became acquainted with him so rapidly that they could hardly believe that they had known him but a few days; and therefore Alice now sat with a shade of deep vexation overspreading her countenance, while she went on mechanically with her knitting. Maud was perfectly unable to enter into her sister's feelings upon this occasion; not being of a character at all liable to sudden attachments, she had not begun to entertain any regard for Captain Scudamore beyond that of a common and recent acquaintance: he might pay as much attention to Miss Reynolds as he liked, without causing her any emotion beyond that of extreme amusement in

watching his proceedings—and, beautiful as she was, she was too unused to homage to feel piqued that her pretensions were overlooked or another woman.

But Alice took the matter keenly to heart. With the simplicity of a very young mind, she had believed all the nonsense which Mr. Scudamore's good-nature and high spirits led him to talk to Maud about his son. She valued her sister's beauty and talents with a jealous sensibility—she thought that the moment Captain Scudamore saw Maud, he would think of her as his father wished he might. She was prepossessed herself by what she knew of him, and she looked on him as something that belonged to Maud; but something, also, that Miss Reynolds, with her usual unprincipled vanity, was very likely to pervert to her own purposes. This was an injury to her sister that she felt deeply, and she was not a little mortified that Maud seemed so indifferent to her wrongs.

"I don't think it is very kind of you, dear, to laugh so much at Captain Scudamore," said Alice, gently, after a long pause on both sides.

"Stop, dear! I'm going to put on some coals," cried Maud, evidently on the brink of going off again at this admonition. "Now then!" she continued, when she had made up the fire to her satisfaction; "I assure you, if I had anything else to amuse me at this present time, I would altogether overlook 'Dick;' but——"

"And I don't think you ought to call him 'Dick,' exactly," pursued Alice.

"Not *exactly?* Would *Diccon* be a pleasant amendment? There is a legend, I once read, of a certain 'Diccon bend the bow.' And pray why shouldn't I laugh?"

"Because you know how vexed Mr. Scudamore would be if—if his son really paid attention to Miss Reynolds."

"Why, my dear Alice, you never could suppose that I believed all the nonsense our good grandfather used to talk, as if he could make me a present of Master Dick—like a child saving up a toy to give to its playfellow!"

Alice was silent.

"And of all the nonsense that people talk in this foolish world," pursued Maud, warming with her subject, "the folly they utter on the subject of love is the most deplorable! Falling in love! I don't believe there is such a thing! No, Alice, I don't really! Two idle people drop into each other's society, and being utterly without occupation, they first mope a little, and then marry; and they try to persuade their acquaintances they were in love! It is a disease, at any rate; and I don't believe that a sober woman who loves her relations and employs her mind, will ever love any one else! The thing can't happen! And I'm really gratified by Mr. Scudamore's opinion of my taste, if he thinks I could be induced to quit *my father* for the sake of Master Dick!"

"Hush!" said Alice, turning her head towards the door, "I hear his step!"

"Ah! I know an old proverb," said Maud, snapping her thread from the energy with which she worked and talked together. "But you are right, Alice. He has made a short visit at the Ferns."

Captain Scudamore now came in, with the very scroll which Maud had tried to pass off for a bouquet. He shook hands with the sisters, drew his chair next to Alice, and gave Maud the paper, saying that his father had desired him to bring it to her.

"Many thanks; now don't forget to tell Mr. Scudamore how much I am obliged to him. You have not the best memory in the world! Alice, this is a movement from Spohr's 'Faust'—you will like it so much—I'll play it to you."

Maud always railed at Captain Scudamore; and he liked it; inasmuch as every man had rather be abused than overlooked.

"But I thought I should have found my father here," said Captain Scudamore; "he asked me to call on Colonel Creswick about a horse we were talking of yesterday, and said that I should be sure to find him with you on my return."

"If you were a little older, Captain Scudamore," said Maud, looking gravely at him over the top of the music desk, "you would know how to limit your expectations to probabilities. Mr. Scudamore retains none of the habits of a military life. He neither drinks, swears, nor is punctual."

"Perhaps, in consideration of the two first omissions, you will forgive him the last," said Captain Scudamore.

"And really, when it is not quite true," interposed Alice, with her usual gentleness; "for Mr. Scudamore's exactness is quite wonderful, when he pleases—he has often astonished us all."

"Bah, you spoil the antithesis!" exclaimed Maud. Then throwing a restless glance round the room as if in search of something provoking to say, she suddenly fixed her brilliant eyes on Captain Scudamore.

"How very ame you walk to-day, to be sure," she said in a pitying tone.

"Well, I thought I walked so much better than I did," said Captain Scudamore, rather mortified; for he believed implicitly what she said.

"What you *did* it is impossible to guess, you hopped, I daresay; but if you would like to see how you managed in the Creswicks' drawing-room yesterday evening, I will ring for Karl, and he shall come and turn over my music leaves. I suppose you turned over the leaves for Miss Reynolds—no, don't deny it; I trust you did not so far forget yourself as to omit so essential a duty. Oh, I don't want you to turn over *my* leaves. You may sit down again. I merely wish to hint that you walk at present just like Karl."

"How do you manage your sister?" said Captain Scudamore, turning with a smile to Alice.

"Oh, don't mind what she says, Captain Scudamore," said Alice; "she does not mean it. I assure you that I hardly recognised your step this morning."

"Hardly, I like that!" exclaimed Maud, "when——" she paused on seeing her sister's beseeching face turned towards her; "when," she added, "I heard you a mile off."

"Then it is clear you were looking out for me," retorted Captain Scudamore.

"Oh, I was," said Maud. "I wanted you to help plant the rose trees."

"By all means. I can manage to dig, I suppose."

"I don't know, but Karl will show you how; and meantime, what do you think of this fragment? Quite organ music, is it not, Alice?"

"Quite," said Alice.

"I can't see any tune in it," said Captain Scudamore.

"Now, there's a bad, revengeful disposition!" exclaimed Maud; "he is angry with me, and he vents his temper upon poor Spohr."

Maud left the piano as she spoke, and wandered about the room, uncertain how she should employ herself next.

"Shall I read to you?" asked Captain Scudamore, observing books lying open upon the table.

"Oh, dear no! don't read," exclaimed Maud, settling herself in her chair; "I always make up my mind to hear a little gossip when you come. Let us have the history of your party yesterday."

"Well, but what do you wish to hear about? The dishes there were at table?"

"Of course not!" exclaimed Maud. "Was it a large party?"

"Yes—pretty well—about twenty people."

"And who did you take into the dining-room?"

"A young lady, whose name I understood was Stapylton."

"Not Miss Reynolds?"

"Certainly not!"

"Had you a pleasant evening?"

"Very much so—I had known Mrs. Reynolds before, and therefore it was agreeable to meet her again—though I really felt awkward in beginning the conversation, since all our mutual recollections go back to the lifetime of poor Lyle."

"Did she seem to feel it?"

"Not at all; she frequently referred to the period when we were all so much together, without the least embarrassment."

"*Can* she have any feeling?" exclaimed Maud, indignantly.

"I don't know—but she is a very attractive woman—there is something so engaging in her manner. She was full of your praises."

"Ah! there she showed her taste. And did you hear Miss Reynolds sing?"

"No; I believe not—no, I don't think anybody sang except Mrs. Reynolds."

"What was Miss Reynolds doing then all the evening?"

"She was playing écarté with young Stapylton at the only time that I happened to notice her."

"Do you think her handsome?" asked Alice, timidly.

"Yes; I imagine she is good-looking," said Captain Scudamore; "but to tell you the truth, I hardly noticed her—she was not conspicuous. Mrs. Reynolds is so completely the first person in every company."

"Poor Miss Reynolds!" exclaimed Maud.

"I don't see the grievance," said Captain Scudamore; "she appears either sulky or proud; and as she does not try to please people, she need not be surprised at the success of those who do."

"Now tell me how Miss Reynolds was dressed," said Maud.

At this question, Captain Scudamore laughed so heartily that Maud started up protesting that she should go to find Karl and plant the rose trees without his assistance; and in pursuance of her threat she fetched Alice's bonnet and cloak and dressed her very quickly, rejecting all the help that he offered from time to time. He addressed himself to Alice with more success, and obtained permission to put away her work while she was preparing for her walk. She even allowed him to lead her into the garden, in spite of Maud's impatient exclamation.

"You need not make a fuss about nothing!" she cried, as he drew her sister's hand through his arm. "Alice knows her way a great deal better than you do."

When Mr. Scudamore came to meet his son, he found Maud and Karl busy planting, and Captain Scudamore walking up and down the gravel walks with Alice.

Maud was very ready with an explanation.

"Alice was chilly standing, and as for Captain Scudamore, he was only a trouble, and so she had sent him out of her way."

Mr. Scudamore was quite satisfied; but the little Lyles were not; for they had been at the end of the laurel walk, shouting and making signs every time Captain Scudamore and Alice came near them, and all in vain. Alice did not see them, and her companion did not hear them; and it was reserved for Maud, when she went down the garden, arm-in-arm with Mr. Scudamore, to catch sight of the little ones stamping with impatience, and clinging to the green gates, and begging Harley to join her voice to theirs.

Pouring out a whole volley of reproaches upon Captain Scudamore for his unaccountable deafness, Maud darted across the road in an instant, and returned with one child in her arms, and the other clinging to her dress; and in another minute Edward was careering in Karl's barrow, and Maud chasing Lucy across the lawn, while Alice and Captain Scudamore stood quietly by, and enjoyed the tumult in their own way.

(*To be continued.*)

CHARLOTTE CORDAY.

IN a house where tarnished gilding and faded satin still glimmered in the long suites of rooms, and tall mirrors half curtained with dust still waited drearily to reflect bygone splendours, there was born in the little provincial town of Argentan in France, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, a baby girl, who was entered in the civil register by the high-sounding names of Marie Anne Charlotte Corday d'Armont.

The family of Corday d'Armont had seen its best days as far as worldly prosperity was concerned, and the infant was wrapped in no fine lawn or costly lace; but the vigorous health and remarkable beauty of the child quickly shone out amid all her surroundings, a distinction far beyond that conferred by valenciennes or rich embroidery.

As she stepped out of babyhood, parents and friends dropped her first names "Marie Anne" when they spoke to her and of her, perhaps because there were many other "Maries" and "Annes" among her relations already, and called her always "Charlotte." The "d'Armont" was seldom used in the family for daily wear, and thus it has come to pass that the name of "Charlotte Corday" is the name by which she shall be known and remembered for all time.

M. Corday was extremely circumscribed in worldly goods and means; the family was rich in traditions and memories, among which the most dearly cherished one was that the great Corneille was counted among its ancestors; but it was extremely scantily furnished in the way of broad lands and moneyed revenues. Children came quickly trotting into the nursery of the old house at Argentan, but louis d'ors did not come in proportion to them. As years went on, M. and Madame Corday found themselves obliged to distribute a few of their numerous olive branches among some of their relations, who were not so well dowered with them. Pretty, bright little Charlotte was naturally the first child whom a relation would choose as an inmate; and who would more willingly open arms and heart to receive her than her old uncle the Abbé?

To him accordingly she was sent, and by him she was brought up for several years.

When Charlotte was playing in the good Abbé's study, the storm of the French revolution was already sullenly roaring as the sound of distant thunder in the social and political horizon of France. Its echoes penetrated, no doubt, even into the Abbé's quiet household, with its atmosphere of religious and scholarly calm, and a clever child like Charlotte was quite certain to pick up some of the words around

her and retain them, and let them sink into her mind and memory to bring forth fruit in due season.

She heard of the queen, beautiful as a celestial vision ; she heard of the starving, overtaxed people ; she heard of the tyranny and reckless extravagance of the nobles, she heard of the weak king, she heard of shameless vice and licence : and though she comprehended all these things at first but dimly, she made pictures of them in her brain and imagination—pictures that grew gradually in brightness, intensity, and clearness as she grew in years.

To these impressions may be added the scholarly teaching of the Abbé, which made her mistress of the Greek and Latin tongues, and his well-defined religious instructions, and we may gain a pretty accurate idea of Charlotte Corday's childhood.

Charlotte was just budding into early girlhood, when she lost her mother. Though she resided with the Abbé, frequent short visits at home had kept the child's family affections very green and sweet and tender, and she mourned for her mother in a gust of natural, youthful grief. "Happy, thrice happy," we say, as we turn away from her who lay in that open grave with husband and children sorrowing over her ; for she was taken away from the evil to come.

Soon after her mother's death, Charlotte Corday was sent to the Abbaye aux Dames to be placed under the care of the Lady Superior, Madame de Belzunce, who had invited the motherless girl to come and take shelter under her wing.

There her character and mind gradually consolidated and unfolded themselves. She was often in the convent chapel in silent prayer ; she was oftener still in the convent garden in solitary reverie. She read much, and read books not generally chosen by girls of her age. Her favourite volumes were Plutarch, Raynal, and Rousseau. She did not mix much in the games and amusements of her young companions in the convent school, but sat apart with her large, dreamy grey eyes, which looked as if there were untold secrets sleeping in their depths, seemingly fixed in the far distance. She did not talk, in school-girl fashion, of new dresses, or of the light gossip of the convent and its neighbourhood, but she was always talking of the days of Greece and Rome, when Greece and Rome were at their purest and best. Her girlish aspiration was that she might for once have been carried back for one brief hour to have talked face to face with Cordelia or Portia.

In the convent shades, the girl thus thought and dreamed on through some years of winter storms and golden summer suns, until she stepped into early, full-blown womanhood.

The suppression of the convents in France, and the death of her motherly friend, Madame de Belzunce, caused Charlotte Corday to be deprived of the shelter and protection under which her youth had grown up. Her beauty and sweetness of disposition, and brilliant social gifts, made her, however, a household inmate to be courted and

desired. A lady called Madame de Bretteville, a large-hearted, generous woman, who had money and position, and knew how to use them well, asked Charlotte to come and live with her; regarding, no doubt, the beautiful, talented girl to be no small acquisition to her family. In those days of few books and no daily newspapers, a lovely young woman, who knew how to talk, was a precious possession in any country-house.

We can give a clear word-painting of Charlotte Corday at this period, as she stood under the roof of the old Gothic mansion said to have been inhabited by Madame Bretteville.

Her tall, symmetrically-moulded figure had the free grace of some beautiful wild creature: her movements were at once so swift and so easy, her finely-chiselled features had both intellect and heart printed upon them; her delicate complexion was changeful as a morning cloud; her eyes now glowed with feeling, now sparkled with intelligence; her chestnut hair hung down in ringlets from beneath her high Normandy cap, and fell even to her waist.

She touched the harpsichord with a light, skilful hand, but the tones of her voice were a sweeter music still; she had a "wondrous witching tongue" as a talker, and when she was animated about any subject, her language rose almost to eloquence. No wonder that the gallant gentlemen of fair Normandy bowed down before her, and there were frequent suitors for her hand. But she rejected them all. She said it was no time for marriage-bells to be ringing when the wounds of France were bleeding fast and deep. She said that, girl though she was, she had made up her mind to live single and to devote herself to her country. Freedom for France was her incessant prayer; freedom for France was her incessant thought; freedom for France was the incessant theme of her conversation.

One scene in Charlotte Corday's life at this time stands out very vividly before us, as we glance back over the troubled waves of history.

A number of guests, all of them friends and relations of Charlotte, are gathered round a dinner-table in Caen, and she is in the midst of them. The king's health is drunk, but Charlotte's glass remains untouched. Then when they ask her why, for Louis is such a good and pious king, and they are troubled and shocked at her behaviour, her sweet, clear voice rings over the table like the notes of a flute:

"He is a weak king, he does not deserve well of France; he does nothing for his country."

While her friends are still gazing at her in mute surprise, for these bold words are strange on the lips of a girl, there is a tumultuous noise in the street outside. They run to the window, not knowing in those days of civil broils and uproar what may come next, and find that the new constitutional bishop, Fanchet, is being escorted through the town, which he has just entered for the first time, with shouts of triumph. Most of the guests at the table are royalists, and M. de

Tournélis, Charlotte's cousin and devoted admirer, who has been sitting by her, wants to lean out of the window and fling a volley of invectives upon the heads of the people. But Charlotte's hand is quickly upon his arm, holding him back, while in tones grave and queenly she rebukes him for deserving so ill of his country.

And now the terrible drama of the French revolution marched on apace. From her corner of France Charlotte Corday watched breathlessly the signs of the times, the gigantic struggle, the tumultuous confusion; and her young life grew, by degrees as it were, into the perplexed web, until it became part of it; until, woman as she was, nay, even girl as she was, she longed to take an active, foremost part in the battle, to write her name in history as a heroine who should be famous because she should help to deliver France. What she desired with all her soul was to see a sober freedom established on French soil, the land at peace and prosperous, the people happy.

At first Charlotte Corday expected great things from the revolution, but as the atrocities of the time grew more and more, as the nation groaned under the blood-stained tyranny of their rulers, she sickened at the name of Republic, for this was a worse despotism than ever yet had been painted upon the page of history. Three were the men, Danton, Robespierre, and Marat, whom Charlotte Corday regarded as the tyrants of France, and upon these she centred her righteous hatred.

It was at this period, when Charlotte Corday was musing on her country's wrongs with a soul all on fire, and was panting to be up and doing something in the cause of freedom, though as yet she scarce knew what, that the discarded deputies of the Gironde arrived in Normandy. Barbaroux was the most able man among them, and Charlotte Corday became acquainted with him.

The two soon grew intimate, for freedom such as he advocated was Charlotte's dream for France, and she had long conversations with him. He painted the horrors carried on in Paris under the sacred name of freedom in glowing colours, and inflamed her spirit more and more. Then all at once her project leapt full-grown and armed from her heroic soul; she, single-handed, would deliver France by striking one decisive, daring blow. She should, no doubt, perish in the act, her own life would be sacrificed, but what cared she, so France was freed. A patriotic, Christian maiden need not fear to meet her God when she should come to Him by the portal of such a deed as this. In all time France would bless her; in all time she should live in the grateful memory of her country; that was the sort of life in which she aspired to live. Marat was the one of the detested triumvirate that enslaved the land, whom she had in the most intense abhorrence, and Marat should fall.

Charlotte Corday said nothing of her project to any of her friends; she was too generous to implicate them in it.

It is a tragic thought that irresistibly takes hold of the imagination: the thought of the girl going about her daily, common occupations,

plying her needle, attending to small household cares, and chatting with her friends over trifling events of the hour, with her stern purpose standing fixed in her mind. At this period she gave away most of her books, which were her most dearly-valued possessions, distributing them among her friends. Her relations and neighbours did not seem at the time to have attached any special meaning to her gifts, but afterwards they were no doubt cherished as dear and precious remembrances.

There is one touching little incident chronicled of her relating to those last days which she spent in her native Normandy.

Across the street, immediately opposite to the house where she lived in Caen, there dwelt a young man who was a skilful musician. It was his custom to practise on the harpsichord every morning, and each day as he played he always observed one casement of the house opposite to be gently opened, as if some one was listening to and enjoying the sweet strains. One morning he perceived that the casement remained closed. He thought little of it at the time; but he afterwards learned that that window opposite was the casement of Charlotte Corday's room, and that his music must have been her very last earthly solace.

Her project completely matured, Charlotte Corday did not linger in its execution.

She travelled from Caen to Paris under the ostensible object of looking after the interests of an old convent friend, who wanted some business done for her in the capital. What a journey must this have been for the girl, who was leaving home and friends never to behold them again; how doubly dear old memories must have been echoing in her mind, while her purpose throbbed ceaselessly in heart and brain!

Arrived at Paris, she went straight to the house of Marat. She told the porter that she had certain important communications to make to him relative to affairs in Normandy which she could disclose only to himself. In this way she gained admittance at once into his presence while he sat in his bath. A few moments after, the blow had been struck by the intrepid, self-devoted girl, and the monster had ceased to live. She was of course at once surrounded and overpowered, as she knew well that she should be, and an hour after was sitting in prison with the certainty of immediate death before her.

Trials were short and summary affairs in those days of the French Revolution. The demeanour of Charlotte Corday was most composed and dignified throughout. There was some faint talk of her advocate pleading insanity on her behalf, but she indignantly rejected it; and then La Garde, who defended her, abandoned the flimsy pretext. Her voice was clear and sweet as the flute stop of an organ whenever she spoke throughout her trial. At the end, when the judge was beginning to speak of her as an assassin, she stopped him with such a lightning flash of pride in her eyes, with such withering scorn in

her tone, that he quailed before her, and hastily broke off his speech, and left the court.

Charlotte Corday preserved her queenly beauty, her bewitching charm of voice and manner, to the last. This latter was never more apparent than when, after her trial, she thanked La Garde for the way in which he had stood by her, and asked, as a last favour to her, that he would defray her prison expenses. In her cell, after the close of her trial, a painter visited her, asking to take her picture. She granted his request in the most courteous manner, and when he parted from her, she gave him one of her long ringlets, which the executioner had just cut off, as a remembrance of her, accompanying the act with a wondrous grace such as a princess might have used in bestowing a jewel on a subject. On her way to the scaffold, Adam Luxe was so transported by the more than earthly loveliness of her face, that he cried out, "Let me die with her!"

It is said that in the middle of this century there lived in Normandy an old man named Halfilâtre, who still preserved, as the most illustrious distinction that could be conferred on a human being, the memory that Charlotte Corday had kissed him when he was a boy. It was, in truth, an honour to be jealously and proudly handed on in his family as a Frenchman; for even more than Joan of Arc is Charlotte Corday the national heroine of France, who for her country's sake willingly laid down her life.

ALICE KING.

COMING HOME.

"The corpse leaves with an escort for transport home."—
Cape Town, June 2nd, 1879.

HOME!—with no smile upon the marble face—
He left that in the long grass where he fell;
The cold sea bears the light form's tender grace—
The land will greet him with a funeral bell.

Home!—seventeen death-wounds in the bare brave breast,
On which beside lies stain'd a tress of hair;
Can even love dare say it is not best,
Though soldier's eyes grew wet to see him there?

The banner'd eagles over him may lie—
The cross—the sword—wreaths wan with ocean foam:
But he—white robed with immortality—
Comes not by land or sea: he went straight Home.

C. E. MEETKERKE.

LINKS AND CHAINS.

From the German of B. Oulet.

WE are certainly slaves—bondsmen, fettered and tied down. Our chains hold us fast. They may be silken cords, willingly donned, or distressing ropes, only endured. They may be visible or invisible. We may kiss them, or shudder at them. All the same, they exist. I can assure you, reader, that in spite of learned treatises on freedom of thought, we cannot even think as we will. We must rather fall in with and pursue the chain of ideas suggested originally from without. Does this offend you? It does not me. I belong not to the clankers of chains, but to their worshippers. And, believe me, I have chosen the better part.

Is it not plain how the whole world is involved?—one must either fret at everything, or at nothing. The particular instance is but a link in a chain. As one cannot attain the position of a universal world-scorner, it only follows, logically, that the patient endurance of consequences is the necessary path. This is not unpleasant philosophy, this——

"Herr Oberlieutenant——"

"Thunder and lightning! have I not forbidden you to interrupt me when I am writing?"

"But this letter, Herr Oberlieutenant, has just been brought."

"Well, lay it down, and on no pretence disturb me again."

Is it not too grievous, when a man has weighty business on his mind, and is bending over his desk, head in left hand, following out his train of ideas—the chief thing being the very capture of these ideas—and into the midst of them a stupid servant's face is thrust—no, I should not put it thus,—rather let us say, an unconscious guardsman enters, and scatters the ideas with his snarling "Herr Oberlieutenant" and his profitless letter. Even at this distance off, I see plainly it is only from my tailor, and is wholly uninteresting. Let it lie there awhile, unread, while I resume my work. This work, as you will have already perceived, is a chapter on the enchainment of our life—a monstrous theme! I am about to publish a philosophical treatise thereon. The fact of my being Oberlieutenant makes no odds. On the contrary—Herr von Hartman, author of 'The Philosophy of the Unknown' was in the army. Nay, it is somehow the moving spring in the matter. I have lately left the Cavalry service, my uncle having died and left me possessor of this estate. I have resolved not to be idle, to devote myself to land business, of which I know nothing, and to supplement that by literary work.

What better use could I make of this lonely country life than the

composition of a celebrated book? Perhaps, besides fame, it may bring me in money; the means of, on the spot, despatching a satisfactory answer to this present tailor's letter; for—to say truth—my estate brings me in next to nothing, and my pension, as Oberlieutenant, is not a large income.

But now I have strayed from my subject, our being all slaves, and tied down. It will cost me some trouble to gather my wits and return to my chapter on Chains. The simplest thing is to let alone metaphysics for the rest of the day. Herr von Hartman cannot bring his system to perfection in one twenty-four hours. Let us see what my estimable tailor has to say for himself. A closed letter always exercises a certain attraction over us. It must be opened. Amazing! I don't know this writing after all!

"Flint Castle,
15th September.

"Frau Katharina Meier has the honour of inviting Herr Baron Ritterglas, on the evening of the 17th, to the betrothal banquet of her daughter Elsbeth with Herr Councillor Schwanberg."

A strange invitation! If I mistake not, Frau Meier is that old fossil widow of the rich sugar merchant, who has lately bought the adjoining property. I never visited them. I knew nothing of them or that there even existed an Elsbeth Meier; and so now this fair daughter of sweetness is betrothing herself. Well, I wish her joy! I must naturally accept the invitation, and to-morrow pay a visit at Flint Castle.

A betrothal! What a chain of pictures this word calls up before the mind's eye! What will come of it? and how much happened before these two hearts found each other. I ought to marry also. I am thirty years of age; of a good old stock, and a not unpleasing exterior. Heaven forgive me! I am falling into the style of an advertisement—and—an idea!—well, why not? *Cela n'engage à rien*, and the joke will be amusing. This instant I will write and send off to the newspaper office a paragraph:

"One desiring marriage—a young man, aged thirty, of ancient race, of not unpleasant exterior,"—

But no, that sounds too vulgar! No charming woman would ever reply to it. Let us head the announcement—

"Game of Chance.

"In ball-rooms, street corners, seaside nooks, or at garden-parties, two hearts often meet, and why not in the columns of a paper? A young man, who has a title, intelligence, and wit, and who wishes for a wife, offering on her side youth, beauty, means and *esprit*, takes, with these lines, a ticket in the great lottery of life's happiness. All letters to be addressed '*Cela n'engage à rien*,' care of Gottlieb Müller, *Times* Office."

"Bohnslav!" (my man is a Pole).

"Herr Oberlieutenant?"

"Take this letter to the Postmaster, register and bring me a receipt."

"I will, Herr Oberlieutenant."

"How often must I bid you say Herr Baron, and not Oberlieutenant. I am not an officer now, but a man of property."

"All right, Herr Ober—Herr Baron."

"Bohnslav!"

"Your orders, Herr Baron?"

"Have you ever seen the people who own Flint Castle?"

"Yes, Herr Oberlieutenant. There is an elegant young lady there."

"Hum! Now off with you to the post!"

The letter is gone. There is a good deal of diversion before me now: the visit; the soirée; the answers to my advertisement, and perhaps some ensuing correspondence. I only fear it will all distract me a little from the composition of my book. No one would believe what depth and concentration of thought is necessary to write a treatise. I never suspected it. I am now making my first attempt. As a preliminary I have here set down some of my ideas on the entanglements of circumstances. Then shall follow my system of philosophy, and, in order to get all my thoughts well on paper (I have laid in a ream to begin with), I imagine a patient listener to whom I discourse. What I say now is just the first hasty expression of my confused meditations, intended to serve as notes for the great work. Everywhere, in the mental as in the material world, I purpose showing the principle of necessary consequences: a colossal idea! But how? Darwin has attempted something similar as regards organisation of matter; but I must throw light on it from another point, from all points of view. I must trace the chain by its links, from the first Atom to the Solar system; as regards man from Adam to my servant Bohnslav.

He says the young lady close to me is very well-looking. Why did I not become earlier aware of that important fact? One thing annoys and unfits me sadly for this work;—it is that my thoughts, in place of proceeding in regular order, take such extraordinary leaps, like young grasshoppers. If my book succeeds we must call it the 'Grasshoppers' Philosophy,' but only confidentially and amongst friends. In the literary world it must have its proper title, 'Theory of Concatenation.'

* * * * *

This ream of paper will last me a long time. I am now only beginning on the second sheet. Since I wrote the first, six idle days have gone by. You think perhaps I lack constancy, and belong to those men who begin all and finish nothing. I will not merit your judgment; so I sit down again, deep in my task. I go on with my theme: and, indeed in these days of self-assertion, it is interesting to

observe the chains which hem us in, and well to point out proofs of their beneficial properties. What are customs, manners, laws, but chains? Only for these I might have lately said to Fraülein Elsbeth: "Most lovely of maidens, come to me and leave your Schwanberg!" She is really beautiful! I fancy her a Judith, dusky, resolute, concealing a fire within. It must be a sweet chain indeed when she untwists her dark locks, and makes of them a silken cord to bind round the neck of her beloved.

She sat opposite me at the banquet, and her cloudy eyes met mine more than once. When this happened, ever to me came the thought, "I wish I had known you earlier."

The bridegroom elect is a neat little man of at least forty-five, and therefore *certainly* twenty years older than Elsbeth. He looks to me a man able to appreciate the possession of a large fortune. The whole match is manifestly of Mamma Meier's making. I don't understand this proud, far-seeing, energetic maiden. How could she make such a loveless choice? But it is all nothing to me. In December the wedding takes place, and I am bidden to it. The mamma was sugar-sweet, and seems to cherish a mighty respect for the Ritterglas family. When I gathered this idea, I gave myself feudal airs, and told tales of the glorious lives and alliances of our ancient-day knights.

"And you are the last of your race?" suggested Frau Meier, tenderly.

"Yes, gracious lady. The house expires with me."

"How sad!" she sighed.

"Yes," quoth I, "on my coffin the old coat-of-arms will be broken, the sword of my father will sink with me into the grave, and the fame of our deeds, henceforth, will live only in the annals of history."

Frau Meier seemed so near weeping here that I hastened to add, "That is if I do not leave behind me a pair of sons." If this good woman did but know that I am not so aristocratically minded, and that it is not my ambition to read my name in armorial chronicles and genealogical trees, but rather to have some such passage as follows entered in a lexicon:—"Ritterglas, Emil, gentleman, philosopher, born 15th October, 1849, author of that incomparable work, *Theory of Concatenation*, which has laid the foundation of a new school, etc., etc."

"What now, Bohnslav?"

"The post, Herr Oberlieutenant."

"Right, so it is!" The arrival of this official is a delightful sensation, specially when one gets a good consignment. What a handful of papers, and now for the letters. This time there is no mistake about my tailor; another from my old aunt, whose birthday I honoured with congratulations, neither very interesting; and this packet? Oh, delightful! Gottlieb Müller has made it up—the answers to my advertisement—one, two, three—seven-and-twenty letters! all addressed—'*Cela n'engage à rien.*' Stand aside philosophy

—I have now no leisure for work—I must plunge into this flood of literature.

* * * * *

Of all these twenty-seven letters only one has made any impression on me, and that I copy wholesale on my sheet of paper, as it certainly looks like a link in one kind of chain. The handwriting is bold, correct, neat, like that of an educated girl.

"Turning off from the dusty commonplace street, I see a leafy lane, leading mysteriously, Heaven knows where—whether to precipices or rose-gardens, none can tell. I make one step into its attractive gloominess, perhaps two, but will certainly not go far. Still, there is a magical attraction in the unusual, the undefined; and, after all, '*Cela n'engage à rien.*' What increases the charm with me is that I feel like a prisoner, who for one hour succeeds in casting aside his chains, and going free; for I am surrounded by innumerable fetters of custom, education, position. I am not at liberty in any sense of the word; and therefore I rejoice doubly in my unexpected flight. I am also not happy. But I will tell nothing of my story. While I step into this by-way I wrap my personality in a thick veil. The recipient of these lines shall not know, or, I hope, ever learn, who the writer is. This shall be—perhaps—a fleeting union of souls. By the answer to this I will quickly learn whether I have to do with a soul at all. Address, A. L., Poste Restante, Vienna."

This letter has charmed me. It impresses me like a black silk mask, behind which gleaming eyes and pearly teeth shine. Out of those orbs a spirit looks. My fancy sees it like fire and flame. Into this leafy way, wherein my unknown has stepped, I follow her gladly. As she says herself, it may lead on into the infinite and end in a garden of roses, or, better still a Heaven of love.

"Bohnslav!"

"Herr Baron?"

"A glass of cold water!"

So! and now it is time to work in earnest. Let us first get rid of all this other rubbish! Is it not true that the material with which one has ever to deal is gigantic. There are the chains of circumstances, of fate, of mountains, nations, seas, climates; also of stars and suns: call these astronomy if you will; also, and lastly, of hearts, of—Love! I will divide my work into volumes, the volumes into books, the books into parts, the parts into chapters, the chapters into paragraphs—but I plan too much! And now, to hold fast by my first idea, and then pursue it into its various ramifications! It would be melancholy if a treatise, dealing with the chains wrought out of regular links, did not, itself, pursue an unbroken regularity. She is perhaps a married woman—and unhappily married? How shall I write to her? Shall it be thus?—"You have made it difficult for me to answer you, having engaged yourself, at once, to discover if I have a soul. But what does that incomparable, indescribable thing consist

in? From the days of Plato till now, men have vainly disputed about it; and yet you would have me place it for you between the lines of a little Poste Restante letter! As for the rest, I know quite well what you mean. I can well imagine with what carefulness one must approach your fine little soul, wrapped in its thick veil; lest, perchance, it should take wings and fly away. What a pity I am not a poet! Perhaps then I might clothe my tremors in words tinged with the perfume of the essence in which your syllables are wrapped, and so meet you midway. But I am no poet. I must therefore only give you a simple assurance that I am worthy of your confidence, my fair unknown one. My word as a gentleman on that. Before all else, in due honour to your mask, it is my duty to introduce myself to you in all openness. My name is Emil, Baron Ritterglas, and I live on my own property. Moreover, you are at liberty to inquire, as you will, into my personal likings, my character, my circumstances; all nearer details which it may please you to demand. I know not, and you yourself seem not to realise, the object or end of this episode. You follow after the indefinite, and wait for the unexpected. I, lady, on the other hand, owe you the confession that my advertisement was not the result of any well-considered plan, but, on the impulse of a moment, as a frolic, was sent out into the world. But this does not hinder that I, like any other young bachelor, would indeed rejoice to get, as my wife, some fair, *spirituelle*, rich young maiden. You can easily comprehend all that. So much concerning my insertion. Yet, if you will, we can leave all that to one side, and regard as the starting point of our correspondence, your letter, which opens into a way with no appointed end. You say you are not happy, not free. I know not what *rôle* I should assume. Shall I endeavour to make you happy and free; or merely try to comfort and afford you some distraction? On my side I am free, so far as a man can be, for it is my judgment that we all, more or less, wear fetters; but no family ties bind me; no State duties; no bonds of love; my time, my heart, or—if it must be—my life is at your service. I remember, truly, one binding thing—I am writing a great book."

It seems to me at this moment that a new interest of this sort is likely to interfere with this work, and with the orderly marshalling of my ideas. I will, however, at once despatch this letter, and then go for a ride. I have written quite enough for one day.

* * * * *

This is my third sheet. Eight weeks without working! If I go on at this rate my book will be ten years on hand. But how can I busy myself in metaphysics when I am so engrossed in this charming correspondence with my lovely Diana. That is how she signs all her letters. I look for the postman with feverish impatience, and then spend hours answering her letters. I believe I have, in this space of time, sent some three hundred sheets to that Poste Restante—whole memoirs! Her letters, also, are ever more lengthy and numerous. I

think that in these five-and-twenty octavo sheets, which I am happy enough to possess in her writing, she has told me all she has felt or thought of in her life, without, in the meantime, betraying any of her outer existence or circumstances. What a brilliant wit, what glowing fancy, what deep feelings she is mistress of! I am in love—yes, a simple raving lunatic for love of her. It does me good to set the fact down in this little set formula. All you indifferent poor folk, envy me. Not for a million of money would I exchange with you. Oh, Diana! Diana!

She has sent me her photograph, yet I don't know if she is beautiful—for the picture does not show her features. The composition of the study is in itself a coquettish poem. The surroundings of the figure do not comprise the usual pillar and landscape in the background with which we are all so familiar in our albums. There is a broad staircase, down which a lady, dressed in full ball toilette, comes. One hand is on the baluster, with the other she holds to her face a large bouquet of roses. She is inhaling their perfume so busily that her brow and eyelids are alone visible. From the nosegay a broad ribbon hangs, on the ends of which the words '*Cela n'engage à rien*' are legible. One dainty foot is seen to the front, while, on the steps, behind, the train of her dress is disposed. Whatever her face may be, her figure is perfect, from the graceful slope of her neck, the round of her full arm, of her tapering waist, to her slender ankle. There is, besides, an indefinite grace and elegance diffused over the whole. Even if the concealed features are insignificant, this lady must be altogether charming. As yet I have no idea whatever as to who she is. I have never attempted to spy upon her concealments. I have not inquired at any of the photographers in the city, nor at the house where her letters go. Oh, no! I will not hunt her down. The name of the artist is rubbed off the back of the picture, and, of course, it gives a great clue. But hitherto I have felt no curiosity concerning the name and condition of my correspondent. The very mystery enhances the charm. Moreover, I seem to cherish a hope that some day she will lift her face out of that bouquet and send me a rose. Just now, however, I am beginning to torment myself with questions. Shall I write boldly and say I love her? I must. I cannot help myself. "Diana, even at the risk, which, since I had your first note, has haunted me, of frightening away my dream lady, I must now venture to step from the world of fancy into reality. I love you, Diana; how could it be otherwise? Within the close lines of five-and-twenty sheets of writing paper you have enclosed all the charms of your nature. This alone is enough to have entangled my heart; but, besides this, you have somewhat lifted the veil from your own feelings, and have allowed me to see their depth. And then your picture! I see half your fairness and guess at much more Dearest, most lovely of women, be mine, will you not?

"If you are not quite free, some chains can be unriveted; but if

this may not be, oh terrible thought! If your portrait, your letters even, are a fiction, let all this knot of confusion cease. It is better so. I am now resolved to search you out, and either shall tear your veil from you, and find—(maddening thought) my dream lady gone, or I shall see my hidden beloved, and say to her in person, as I now do on paper—Diana, I love!"

Yes, this day I send off a decisive letter; and in three days an answer may—must—be in my hands. How can I kill the dragging time till then? As to my treatise, I can't bear to think of it. A lover who dissertates on common feelings and philosophises must have much resemblance to a galvanised frog lecturing on muscular movement. Away with abstractions! It is all subjective and objective with me now. Diana! Diana! How will your answer read?

* * * * *

As I have written here the above question, I must also enter the answer. Besides, it gives me a renewed pleasure to copy this letter, already so many times read :—

"Your tumultuous epistle, Monsieur Emil, has quite terrified me but though I still tremble a little, my alarm is not altogether un pleasant. It is what we call agreeable nervous excitement. You must know, with all my acquaintance, through poets and romancists, of woman's so-called supremest bliss, I have hitherto never felt even a premonition of the imagined sentiment. Now, first, M. Emil, in this throng of correspondence, the dream-figure steps forth for me too into reality, and I tremble and smile together. But, my most honourable of correspondents, do not search me out. I am resolved to drop the mask myself when the right time comes; and you need not fear I shall disappear, or prove a myth. The photograph is my likeness. The letters were written out of the depths of my inner consciousness, and each word is but a mirror of my mind. On my side I do not doubt your uprightness. I recognised that in your first letter, as well as your worth, and intellectuality, and sensibility; they are all displayed in your succeeding sheets. Your little scheme of turning philosopher, however, dear sir, is all vain—a harmless vanity. What you are by nature meant for is, a sensible, honourable, thoughtful man, who ought to be happy.

"Do you know that your neighbour, Count Saalfeld, is about, in a few days, to assemble a large harvest gathering of friends? Your whole country-side goes to his house then, and also many visitors from Vienna are invited. And now listen. I, too, make one of this party. Emil, will you recognise your Diana? I give you no key to the riddle; I shall carry no token on my person. I shall enjoy seeing your searching glances passing from one to another of us ladies. I warn you, and demand of you, not to make any closer inquiry, for I will of my own accord reveal myself. This is my last letter—that is, at any rate, the last of the series—*Cela n'engage à rien.* After we have

met, if I write to you ever again, it must run '*Cela engagerait à tout.*' But, M. Emil, shall I indeed find you worthy of that? DIANA."

I cannot confide to these pages even an idea of the tumult of delight into which I have been plunged at the thought of this coming blissful meeting. One thing I, however, can express, namely, that for no reward would I now exchange with any man living. Yesterday, when I received Saalfeld's invitation, I put it aside with indifference, saying to myself, "Well, it will afford me some diversion, perhaps, to go, as I am in such a bad working humour." I little dreamed of the magical charmed circle into which the prosaic card would give me admittance. It lies here now, close to Diana's last letter, and I view it tenderly. As we are bidden to sporting amusements, a pair of deer, a game-bag and gun, are drawn on it. The designs should be allegorical figures, angels, masks, and the keys of Paradise. Expectation of coming happiness is reckoned one of our greatest earthly enjoyments. In this pleasure I am now wrapped with powerful intensity, beyond even the blessedness of the child waiting for its Christmas presents, or of the theatre-lover watching for the curtain to rise, and present his highest ideal of art.

Oh, when I think that within these next few white sheets of my portfolio the unfolding of my whole little romance will soon be entered! For I pledge myself to put down the result of this momentous visit. Indulgent sympathiser with all my fine theories, you shall at once learn the continuation of this chain, whose first links you have seen begun. All shall be told, to the smallest particular, even if the tale be one of vexation. If you are minded to laugh at me, do so. I am at present so wholly contented with my own lot that the shafts of ridicule seem harmless. The much-to-be-envied philosopher of links and chains is at your mercy; he puts himself there.

* * * * * * *

I now redeem the promise I have made. I will give no hint as to the humour in which I commence again to write. Astonished, reader, though you may be at my tranquillity, it nevertheless exists.

When I awoke, however, on the morning of Saalfeld's first festivities, a thrill of delight penetrated me throughout as my waking mind realised that to-day I should at last, in the flesh, see my Diana, the mysterious and charming unknown.

The covers were about a mile from Saalfeld's castle. We were invited first to breakfast, and after the hunt a great dinner-party was to take place. I was in the saddle, booted and spurred, by nine. My trusty Bohnslav (in every tale of this sort a trusty servant is introduced, I think, on which account my Pole comes in usefully; but of his trustiness I have really had little or no experience) had already been despatched with my portmanteau of toilette necessaries.

After an hour's ride I reached my destination. Saalfeld came forward to greet me.

"Ah, Ritterglas, I began to think you would not come. It is ages since we have seen you either here or at any of the neighbouring covers. What has been the matter? Were you ill?"

"I? Ill? No, thank you. Have you many guests here? Ladies?"

"Oh, yes—a house full! Ladies also. But now it is time to think of breakfast. You will see enough of the ladies to-night."

"What ladies have you here? Tell me their names, like a good fellow. What do they look like, and where have they come from?"

"What zeal! I know nothing of them at all, Ritterglas. Heaven knows I couldn't tell you about even one of them! You ought to know our usual circle, and do, I suppose. My sister does all the honours for the ladies, and invites whom she will. I only trouble myself about the sport and the male guests."

After breakfast we immediately started on our shooting expedition. Now, in ordinary times, although no great Nimrod ever, yet I am a respectable shot; but on this occasion I was covered with shame amongst my companions. My thoughts were so busy elsewhere that I saw no hares, much less shot any; although this day witnessed the slaughter of about five hundred. Once only was I roused to interest during the hours devoted to sport. Some one near me cried out mockingly, "It is evident, Herr Baron von Ritterglas, that you are no worshipper of Diana!" I gazed in dumb surprise at the speaker. "Diana? Diana? How? You know her then? and she has worshippers? Perhaps you are one of them. What about her? Say out all you can!"

"I must beg of you, sir, to keep your gun from such close proximity to me!"

"Ten thousand pardons! But what of Diana?"

"Come, I don't see why you should be so excited! Unless you are Actæon, who was in love with the goddess, you need not be so jealous of her name being used!"

"Oh, is that all? Hum!"

"Fall back into your position, pray, Baron; we have no time for conversation in the midst of such splendid sport."

Towards six o'clock we all trooped into the Castle. My trusty Bohnslav awaited me in the chamber appointed for my use, and had all things in readiness for my evening toilette. The question as to whether I should appear in civil attire or in military uniform had exercised me much. I had decided for the former—as I believed the simple evening dinner dress would be most acceptable to Diana; because it is a distinction in itself to wear this with becomingness. I have, besides, never quite realised my rank as Oberlieutenant; although, but for my philosophic turn, I might have served on, and received my company.

A bright fire burned in my grate; warm water smoked on the washstand; my evening suit lay spread out on the bed; and, in the

mirror-stand, four lighted wax-candles were placed. On the table before the sofa lay a tea-pot, cup and saucer, sugar-bowl, and rum flask. The heavy curtains had been drawn before the window, and, after tramping through the moist, dark November night, it was inconceivably pleasant to enter this charming, warm room. It wanted as yet an hour of the dinner-gong. After dressing, I took a stretch on the couch, until the first clang sounded through the house. I instantly sprang to my feet, put a last touch to my neck-tie, and left the place. I was up in the second story, and to reach the reception-rooms had to traverse long, luxuriously carpeted corridors and stair-cases, adorned, at intervals, on each side with statues and pictures. All these details of beauty made a deep impression on me. When the mind is highly strung upon any subject, the externals of such thrilling times can never be forgotten. Thus I now observed everything. I entered the drawing-room with a beating heart, and a long-drawn breath, receiving a fresh impression of pleasure from the scene of pomp, beauty and sweetness before me. Some twelve or fifteen ladies, with as many gentlemen, were already assembled, and were dispersed in various groups throughout the gorgeous salon, gay with gilding and glasses and damask hangings in high art shades. I had to draw aside for another person to enter—a lady who rustled past me; beautiful and most elegantly dressed. Was this, perhaps, Diana?

Count Saalfeld and his sister stood together, near the fireplace. Thither I carried my greetings. The lady, a stiff, elderly dame, reached me her hand, with the query: "I trust you have had successful sport, dear Baron?" Happily the entrance of a new set of guests, to whom she had to turn, saved me from being obliged to answer.

I now glanced round at the other ladies present. There were many pretty girls, and also several more advanced in life, and rather insignificant-looking; none amongst them all in the least corresponded in appearance with my ideal Diana. The fair individual who had entered the room with me now stood in the alcove near the window with her back towards me.

That I decided must be she, and I turned to Saalfeld. "Will you introduce me to a few ladies?" I said.

"Gladly: are they all strangers to you?"

"Yes. Who is that near the window?"

"Hey! Take care of her—she is a most alarming coquette!"

"How so? Tell me a little more of her."

"Well! Firstly, she is a Pole; and they are all flirts."

"Is she married?"

"Divorced, or something of that sort, see? Do you not know those ladies coming in now?"

"Oh! Frau Katherine Meier and her daughter," I said.

You are acquainted with them then! They are very near neighbours of ours, and though my sister is very exclusive, I persuaded

her to send an invitation to Flint Castle," Saalfeld explained in an apologetic manner; "and certainly the Fraulein is wonderfully handsome."

"Then I suppose Herr Schwanberg is also amongst your guests? But pray introduce me to the beautiful Pole."

Frau Meier was now close to us, and I bowed my greetings, but she held out her hand with a smile.

"Ah, Herr Baron! I am glad to meet some one I know," she exclaimed. At this instant the door opened and dinner was announced. Saalfield motioned to me, and I was, of course, constrained to give my arm to my neighbour. I found myself, presently, placed between her and another elderly lady. The fair Pole was quite at the opposite end of the table and, as I am rather near-sighted, I saw little of her features; but perceived that she glanced towards me often. Fraülein Elsbeth Meier was just across the hospitable board, and well in my view. When I greeted her she gave me back a smiling salutation. "Happy Schwanberg!" I mentally exclaimed, and this reminded me to say to her mother, "Is not your future son-in-law here to-night, gnädige Frau?"

"My future son-in-law? Oh! Have you not heard that is all at an end?"

"Indeed! I am very sorry. This is the first I have heard of it."

"Oh! There is nothing to be sorry about! It is much better as things are, I fancy. He was too old for Elsbeth, and she did not love him. Before they were quite a month betrothed she suddenly declared she would not marry him. Letters, presents, and ring were all sent back, at once."

I heard all this with very scattered attention, as I was covertly watching every movement of the interesting Pole. In spite of my short sight I perceived that she was in lively talk with an officer on her left hand. "Perhaps I would have done better to wear my uniform," I meditated, while I tried to answer my too talkative companion. "Yes, it is sad enough this, no doubt. It must have troubled you a good deal!"

"Troubled! Quite the contrary. The match was a good one, certainly, as Schwanberg is a sort of millionaire; but then we have had good luck of late: about a fortnight after she had dismissed her bridegroom, she came in for a most unexpected fortune of two millions of marks left her by an uncle, her father's brother; so she is now richer than all her brothers together are."

"Why! is not Fraulein Elsbeth then your only daughter?"

"Only daughter, yes; but I have three sons by my first marriage, to whom Flint Castle and all my property must go. Before this good luck Elsbeth's dower was very modest indeed, and Schwanberg would have been a brilliant match; but *now* she is the richest heiress in this part of the country, and has every right to look higher; even perhaps to a Count. It is just as well, if one can, to have a pretty

coat-of-arms and a coronet; and, if my daughter were a Countess, perhaps this proud old lady, our hostess, would be less condescending to me to whom she makes believe her invitation for to-day was quite a wonderful favour!"

This chatter was frightfully uninteresting to me, but I had to bear it until dinner was over. Then I again, as soon as ever we were all re-assembled in the drawing-room, begged of Saalfeld to introduce me to the Pole. He took me into the smoking-room: three or four ladies who were not shy of the cigars were here seated on the low Eastern couches amongst a crowd of gentlemen. Half sitting, half lying, my Pole was placed amongst the cushions of a small sofa, her foot (it must be the very foot which the photograph displays) a little extended beneath the hem of her dress.

"Will you allow me to introduce my friend, Baron Ritterglas, to you, Madame de Bowrowska," Saalfeld said, retiring as he spoke.

I sat down beside the lady, who reached me her hand with a gracious smile. Her features were not regular, but had much of the expression and animation such as usually distinguish her country-women. Her eyes were full of fire; her brow, which was now covered with curled hair, might easily have been that shown in the picture, and yet I thought it more commonplace than my Diana's. I could not compare her arm and neck with my mental pattern, as both were concealed from view by her costume, but the hand seemed much like my ideal's, and, above all, the dainty little foot. The figure, too, was elegant and pretty. No doubt this was she; and yet —and yet—I felt a certain sense of disenchantment. The reality answered not to my dreams. She spoke first.

"Were you fortunate at the sport?" (Always the same query).

"Diana was my one idea," I said.

"Really! So passionate a sportsman! And how many hares have you killed?"

"Is a poor sportsman then to have no thoughts for anything but hares and such animals?" I exclaimed.

"You told me yourself your whole mind was on the game."

"Diana, I know you," I half whispered.

"What?" she replied, as though not having caught my meaning.

I could not repeat my remark, as some other gentlemen came into the room, and the conversation became general. Madame de Bowrowska displayed much merry wit; and used her sparkling eyes continually. I am not sure to whom she gave the preference, but I know many glances fell on me. "A coquette!" I murmured; "Saalfeld was right *there*, at any rate."

I returned to the other room, and resolved to talk with every woman present, lest I might possibly be mistaken in believing this lady to be my correspondent.

I made the acquaintance of three young countesses, sisters reared in the "Sacré Cœur," and the chief attractions of the last Carnival

season. Their conversation ranged only upon the Court and on Society balls, and was bristling with blue-blooded pride of descent. Diana could not be one of those. A certain spiritual Frau von Hochfels, no longer young, yet very charming, made me hesitate a moment; but when I glanced at her unlovely hand I knew I was again on the wrong track. During my round of inquiry I came upon Fraülein Elsbeth. Certainly she carried off the palm of beauty in the assemblage; many young gentlemen surrounded her, attracted as much, perhaps, by her recently-acquired fortune as by her personal merits. I mingled in this group, but the centre of it was cold, *distrait*, and silent. This, at any rate, is no soulful being, I mentally exclaimed; and, after exchanging a few difficult sentences I was once more continuing my investigations when I received a severe shock. Saalfeld's fifty-year-old sister, upon whose chin a more than incipient downy adornment was visible, called me to her side.

"Do you play whist, Baron?" she inquired, with much friendliness.

"I don't know one card from another, gracious lady."

"Oh, I don't intend to tie you down to a game. You might just as well confess to some knowledge; *Cela n'engage à rien.*"

When I heard these words a cold shiver ran down my back. "Diana, are you there?" I whispered, trembling. But the lady gazed at me, in such evident astonishment, that I at once perceived, with unspeakable relief, her remark had not been weighted with any deep significance. Thus I went from one to another, but always was persuaded that in none present could I find, nay, or even wish to find, Diana. We had music, conversation and cards. Not before midnight was the programme for the next day's pleasuring propounded. After breakfast we were to hunt, as before, and in the evening a masked ball was to wind up the festivities. The ladies were challenged to mystify us gentlemen, if they could. Thus we separated —our hostess saying, as we bade her good-night, that she hoped we would all find good entertainment to-morrow night, as she expected a large assemblage. "This house will be very full, as many guests come for this costume ball from Vienna."

My heart beat tumultuously as I ascended to my room. I felt my half-vanished hopes revive and my joyful expectations return. "Perhaps Diana will only arrive to-morrow," I murmured to myself, blissfully.

Madame de Bowrowska accompanied us in our sporting expedition next day, in an elegant hunting costume, carrying a pretty gun over her shoulder. She was very coquettish with me, and looked charming. I was again almost certain this must be Diana; yet, to all my allusions to our long correspondence, she assumed total ignorance of my meaning. We were not, however, long by ourselves, as the interesting Pole was besieged with attentions. On this occasion I redeemed my character as a sportsman, and massacred

as many birds as possible, knowing that I was watched by such a fascinating lady. I once more pumped Saalfeld concerning her history.

"Yes," he said, "she is beautiful, but treacherous; and not a good woman in any sense of the word. I advise you to give her a wide berth. She made her husband miserable; and then, of her own will, separated from him; she knows how to lead her worshippers on, and then laughs at their sentimentalities. Are you aware that, in a duel fought on her account, an excellent young man lost his life, and Madame danced next night at the Embassy Ball?"

These stories of Saalfeld made me very uncomfortable; but, then, as I said to myself, "Women are often misjudged. If she is the author of all those letters, I know her better than the world can."

As night fell we returned to the Castle; and while I rested in my comfortable room, I endeavoured to bring my mind into a composed state with the aid of mingled meditation and tea. "Ritterglas," I said to myself, "my good fellow, you have been too eager about grasping an ideal happiness. At the best this thing can only bring you a *bonne fortune*, not the blessing you want; a divorced coquettish woman can never content your heart. You should have kept at your work, in place of writing advertisements. But, after all—who knows?—perhaps Diana is yet to come. She may arrive during the next two hours, to dinner, or, later still, to the ball." So musing, I heard the door open. "What do you want, Bohnslav? It is still too early to dress."

"A chambermaid gave me this for the Herr Baron," my trusty servant said, laying a small parcel before me. It was a box. I lifted the cover, and found a buttonhole bouquet—a rosebud lying on damp moss—and a note with the words, "A greeting from Diana."

The well-known writing impressed me like the sight of a lost, believed-in, and recovered friend's face. In an instant my dream-woman returned and filled my mind, of late so distracted by Madame de Bowrowska. By-and by, wearing my flower, I entered the drawing-room as excited as on the previous day, and certain now that Diana was here. The company was much more numerous, and there were many pretty women I had never seen before; and yet there was no time for making their acquaintance, as dinner was shortly announced. I was again Frau Meier's neighbour, and I fear my conversation was not very edifying. She examined me as to my favourite occupations, and also concerning my coat-of-arms. Naturally, if questioned on my employments, I think of my philosophic studies, and feel I ought to explain I am not only a student, but aim at founding a new school. True, Diana, when she heard this, called my authorship a harmless pastime; but women do not understand such things. I have a dim recollection that in my answers I mixed up philosophy and shields in a wondrous manner. Frau Meier certainly shook her head in an

astonished way at times. I may have told her my armorial bearings consisted of links and chains, and that my book would contain many lances and some oblique chevrons.

On this occasion we gentlemen remained at table, English fashion, after the ladies, who left us earlier than usual to prepare for the masked and fancy ball. Perhaps an hour or more passed before we were all reunited. Even our hostess, together with all the mothers and aunts present, wore dominos. The younger ladies were in every variety of costume such as could be hastily devised, for the whole thing was a somewhat impromptu affair.

I knew now that my hour was come; now or never would Diana approach and reveal herself. I had scarcely thought this when a majestic and elegant veiled woman drew near. She wore a rich satin domino, which fell about her in graceful drapery, and in her hand she carried a nosegay of roses. I stepped forward and met her. "Diana!" I whispered.

She placed a trembling hand on my arm, and stood beside me silently. Her hand was not gloved, but lay as white as snow on my sleeve, and was the same, with its exquisite tapering fingers, which in the photograph leaned upon the balusters.

"Diana, Diana," I repeated, "say only one word to me!"

"Yes, I am Diana, Baron Emil." The answer was rather breathed than spoken, and the lady trembled visibly. I was myself so agitated that I could not say more. I led her out of the thronged room, through a number of gay apartments, until we at length found ourselves alone in a small cabinet, richly adorned with rare plants and flowers.

Near the hearth were two arm-chairs. Diana took her hand from my arm, sat down in one, and motioned me into the other. We were silent for a little, and awkward. She presently roused herself, as it were, and put her little satin-covered foot on the fender.

"Diana," I said at last, "we are alone here; let me see you."

She shook her head. "Not yet," she whispered unsteadily.

"You seem afraid of me. Have you lost your confidence," I said—"the trust you breathed in your letters? Do you withdraw from myself the sympathy your letters gave me?"

She shook her head again. "No, it is not that," she murmured. "But, do you see, the meeting of our souls in that imaginary lane, which enticed me onwards into our strange correspondence, is now transformed into the ordinary intercourse of a lady and gentleman by a common-place fireside; and now the whole singularity—I must say unseemliness—of our letters has overwhelmed me, and I feel ashamed—almost miserable. If I speak to you any further, I must retain my disguise. Behind it I feel some shelter—something like the cover of a letter. It is the only remnant of mysticism left in our friendship."

"Friendship, Diana? On my side I have ventured to write of love!'

"Baron Emil, you know not who I am, nor how I look!"

"I know more than that," I interrupted. "What is a name, a face, in comparison with such thoughtfulness, such spirituality as speak in your dear letters?"

"And you, Baron, are so well known to me, in the same manner. I showed you all my heart; but, like Juliet in the Balcony scene, I feel my cheeks burn; and, like her, I thank the night, which hides my blushes—I thank my disguise."

I caught her hand, which breathed to me a perfume of violets, such as her letters always bore, and I lifted it to my lips: "And, like Romeo, I swear thou shalt ever be the mistress of my heart!"

At the magic and familiar word "thou," she started, and withdrew her hand quickly.

"You are too impetuous, Baron; you swear too early: you do not even know if I am free."

"You should remember, you went surety for that, Diana, when you wrote the words '*Cela engagerait à tout!*" My highest wish is—is, Heaven grant you are unmarried! It was a marriage advertisement began this, you know, and I am ready, and anxious, for home treasures and joys!"

"But you stipulated for riches!"

"Good Heavens! I value the poetry of luxury as well as any one; but if the girl of my heart has not a farthing, and is content to share my modest home, I shall be the happiest of men. As to the rest, I can earn money—"

"And how?" asked Diana.

"You know—my literary proclivities; I told you of them. When my 'Philosophy' reaches the eighth edition——"

Here a silvery laugh rang through the room.

"Who laughs uncovers," I exclaimed; "Diana, say a gracious word to me—give me a hope!"

"Whilst I am concealed, I must say one earnest sentence, Baron Ritterglas. I thank you from my heart for proposing to an unknown individual: but perhaps you have hunted me down! *Do* you know who I am?"

"On my honour, I do not!"

"Then I thank you," she continued, "and I give you my answer. I know *you*, and that you are an honourable man: and—pardon me—no philosopher; rather a poet. Yes, by your letters you opened a new world to me. I was buried in my own conceits and book knowledge; I fancied myself a genius: and I felt very unhappy in my circumstances. I despaired of ever seeing my ideal; and thus your correspondence brought me into a new circle. I came in contact with a soul beyond my own in power; and with a heart as warm as my own, filled with love to man and reverence for God. Then came your letter, saying, 'Diana, I love you;' and—then——"

"And then—say on, Diana—your words are music!"

"I ceased to feel unhappy, Baron Ritterglas—I became happy—oh so happy!"

Oh, that I could fall on my knees and kiss the hand she reached me! But this was impossible; the room door opened, and Saalfeld entered.

"Ha! here we have a little comedy in progress!—and it is nearly time to put off dominos. I want you all to assemble in the ball-room!"

At the first sound of disturbance, Diana had escaped to the window, where she now stood. Saalfeld came close to me and whispered: "You seem to be intent on courtship; but I advise you to keep yourself free of entanglements. I have a project on hand for you—that beautiful Elsbeth Meier—what do you think of it? Two millions of marks! My sister thought it out first."

"Unfortunately, my heart is not free!"

Diana approached, and emboldened by her affection, whispered softly, "I beg your pardon, but I have heard what you said."

"Then you know my answer; my heart is not free."

"Fair domino, it is you who have fettered this gentleman's heart," Saalfeld said, bowing to her.

"Yes, it is I, and I take possession of it," she replied, slowly dropping her disguise as she spoke. She stood before me, a lovely vision. "Elsbeth!" I cried.

"What mischief have I been at, I wonder?" sighed the Count.

"*Cela n'engage à rien*," laughed the lady.

"*Cela engage à tout*," I answered.

Saalfeld shook his head. "I don't understand a word of it," he exclaimed.

* * * * *

To-morrow is our wedding-day. I have laid aside my Philosophy. We, my Elsbeth and I, spend the winter in Rome; and, in the spring, intend to take possession of our newly-purchased estate. Then I resume my work; and you must confess that I have the best reason to be content with my theories. A chain of ideas, arising out of my own wisdom, led me, through a concatenation of circumstances, into the blessedest of all enchainments—union with a beloved woman. I have every right to honour Links and Chains! I believe still in my philosophical work; and, that on its completion, I shall be one of the most honoured of writers. The main point to consider, as I have before remarked, is, how to proceed after a well-arranged plan, advancing in regular order.

OF USING WHAT WE HAVE.

A WISE man has said that most of the failures of life are caused by pulling up the steed just when he is jumping. . No doubt some failures are so caused; and these are the failures of men who have had a good start. Boldness forsakes them just at the point where it is most needed; calmness gives place to excitement, and firm grasp to trembling hands. The good old poet meant to give warning against this possibility when he wrote the fine lines:

> "He either fears his fate too much,
> Or his deserts are small,
> Who dare not put it to the touch,
> To win or lose it all."

But many more fail where the few succeed, simply because they are above *using what they have.*

This is the evil which present-day education and present-day class prejudice do so much to foster. The sons dislike the idea of beginning at the point where the fathers began, and would *start* at the top of the ladder; forgetting that he who would succeed in any department of life must work his way up from the lowest rung, step by step.

And then gentility does so much mischief—clerkships and such positions are run after, but handicrafts are regarded as almost degrading; and idleness and luxurious habits are regarded as the infallible marks of the "gentleman."

With the result that our sons aim at what they are not fit for, and will not use what they have.

Germans, Dutchmen, Belgians, and Americans even, come in and fill up the vacant places, and young Englishmen in crowds are compelled to go to Australia or Canada, or New Zealand, there to undertake far more menial labour than might have sufficed to carry them into good positions at home had they been but content and wise enough to use what they had.

Proverbial lore might have taught and warned. There is a good Scotch proverb which says: "He that uses what he has will never want;" and another, which has its fellow in English: "Dinna pour awa' your dirty water till you've got clean." Emerson sets the same truth in his forcible style when he says: "We must fetch the pump with dirty water if clean cannot be had." To the same purpose the sententious and thoughtful Thomas Fuller: "The knowledge of warfare is thrown away on a general who does not make use of what he knows."

Our young men of the class we have spoken of act in direct defiance of the saw: "Handle your tools without mittens," and expect to compete with foreigners, who have not been so indifferent to the

principles of success as they have been. "Dinna dry the burn because it may wat your feet," is a Scotch saying which here comes to the mind with a fine feeling of practical applicability. "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush"—even in the Australian bush, where not a few Englishmen have gone to seek fortune by pathways that they had despised to walk on at home, when they had the chance; and another Scotch proverb rises to the mind as especially appropriate: "A layin' hen is better than a standing mill."

With admirable discrimination, too, the Scotch follow up this proverb by another to this effect: "A gude calf is better than a calf o' a gude kind." In "The Successful Merchant" we find this apothegm aptly illustrated: "Poor circumstances are like poor relations—if you try to deny them they will humble you; if you take kindly to them you will raise them up."

Indeed, in some respects, it is an advantage to be compelled to *do without*—to "use what we have," and feel that we are doing it. There is no pleasure equal to the sense of triumph in this way. No credit to the man who has everything in his favour, and never feels the lack of instruments. Repletion of these may numb or never call out the inventive instinct. Perhaps it was this Zoroaster meant when he aptly said: "Only the light-armed arrive at the summit."

There is a very good Tuscan proverb—and all the Tuscan proverbs are very incisive and direct: "Though all cannot live on the piazza, every one may feel the sun;" and there is another admirable proverb to the same effect from a very different nationality, the Swiss: "The goat must browse where he is tied." But better still, perhaps, as a parting word of wisdom, is the couplet of Goethe:

"Wer sich nicht nach der Decke streckt
Dem bleiben die Fusse unbedeckt."

"He who does not stretch himself according to the coverlet will find his feet uncovered."

A. H. Japp, LL.D

THE MOSQUES OF CAIRO.

By Charles W. Wood, Author of "Through Holland," "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.

Test Pillars: Mosque of Amrou.

We turned away from the Mosque of Hassan and the Place Roumeleh, with its motley crowd, its camels, its busy air of excitement. Apparently a great trade was going on, but in reality very little was being done beyond conversation. The citadel looked down upon it all, as if altogether above the meanness and traffic of the world. On the highest point of the rock, the dome and minarets of the Mosque of Mohamet Ali, outlined against the clear sky in serene repose, seemed a silent reproof to all who were too much concerned with the cares and riches of life.

We were surrounded by every Oriental sight and sound. All European influence had been left in the regions of the hotels and public gardens—the new quarter of the town. There was nothing in our immediate neighbourhood to break the Eastern charm. Mosques with their cupolas and minarets overshadowed us; we had only to raise our eyes to fall under their charm. The Tombs of the Caliphs were so near that all the previous night's moonlight fascination swept over us like a returning wave. Not far off were the cemeteries where the dead reposed in a grandeur and solemnity only surpassed by the Caliph mausoleums.

The crowded and lively streets were full of the allurement of Oriental life. All the different people of Cairo were represented, the modern Egyptians in stronger force. Turks and Levantines, Armenians and Jews, Copts and Mohammedans mingled their turbans and their flowing abbas, whilst here and there a dervish stood out in conical-shaped hat and ample cloak. All seemed intent on business, and there was much good-tempered hustling and elbowing. But we never saw any unseemly quarrelling in Cairo, as we had occasionally seen in other Oriental cities, where flashing eyes and angry voices and drawn daggers are too common an experience to excite the least apprehension: symptoms of murder and bloodshed generally ending in nothing. They occur in broad daylight and are open and above board. Unlike the impulsive anger of the Italian, the secret vendetta of the Corsican, there is no taking your enemy unawares and using the assassin's knife in the dark.

All the houses about us were Oriental. We were out of the region of the shops for the moment, and a quieter element reigned. The lower parts of the houses were plain, frequently without window, whilst the entrance door—often Moorish and artistic in style—was well closed. Above, were beautiful mushrabeeyeh casements, the uppermost generally devoted to the harem. Behind many of these no doubt bright eyes were looking down upon the busy scenes, enjoying them all the more that they were forbidden pleasures; for the human heart, inconsistent and full of unsatisfied desires, longs for the unattainable.

"We are bound for the Mosque of Kalaoon," said Osman; "but on our way let me show you an interior to which I have a privileged *entrée*."

As he spoke, the carriage drew up at a house of no outward pretension. The lower portion, apart from the entrance, was a dead wall, but the mushrabeeyeh windows above stood out picturesquely. At our summons the door was quickly opened, and we passed through a narrow passage into a magnificent courtyard adorned with palms and Eastern shrubs, growing in the centre. Outward plainness and simplicity in contradistinction to internal richness and magnificence has been handed down from the days of the despotic Mamelukes, when property and the sanctity of home were never safe. In those days it was often only too necessary to conceal all evidences of wealth from the outer world. The danger has passed, but the custom remains and is good.

Osman inquired for the Sheykh or master of the house, and was told that he was in his harem.

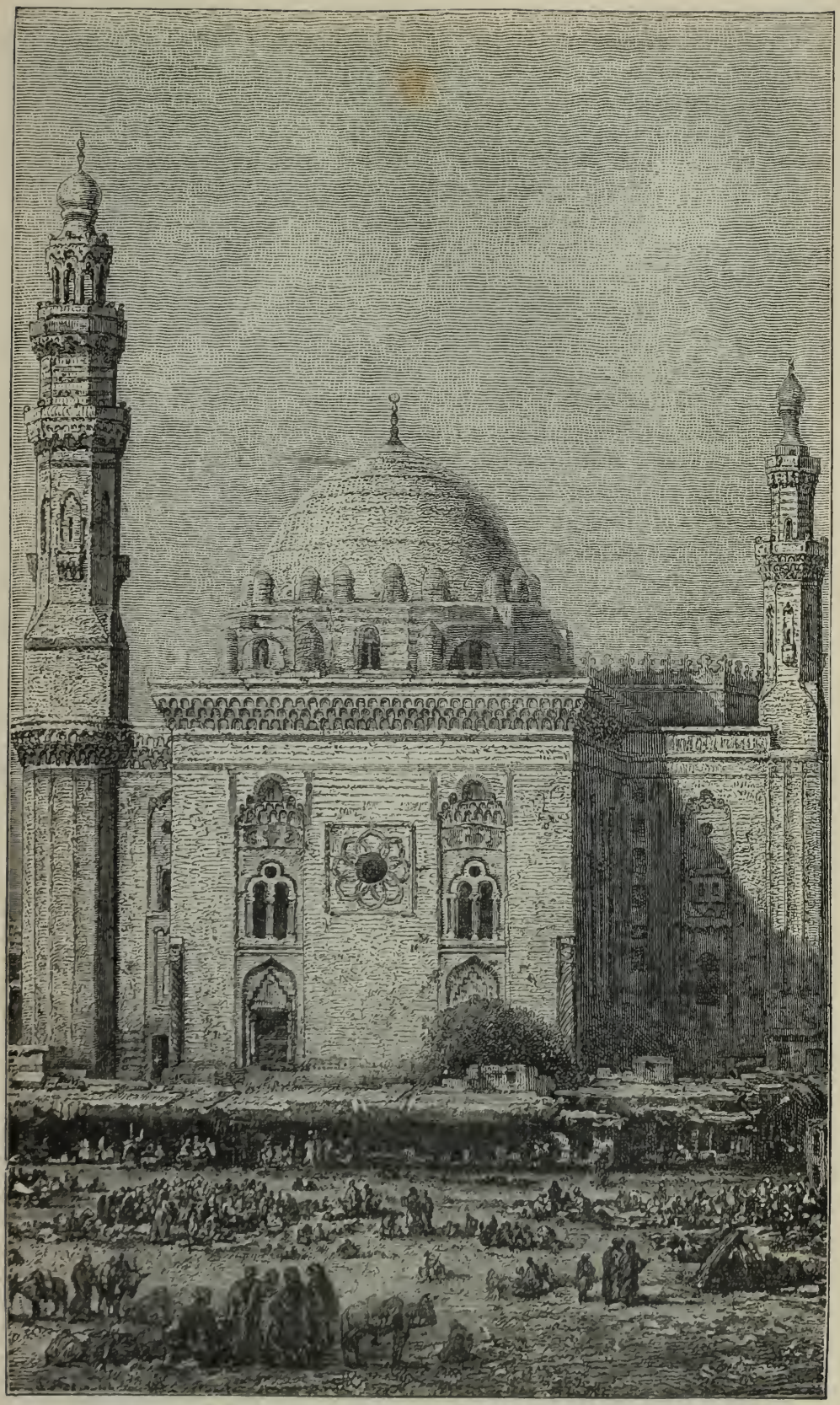
"Disturb him not," replied Osman. "This simply means," turning to us, "that he has withdrawn for the moment from the world, and is enjoying himself in the bosom of his family. His wives and children are probably around him, and he is making much of them, and they of him. In spite of a plurality of wives, and much

one would like to see altered and reformed, a great idea of the sanctity of home exists in the modern Egyptian: the stronger perhaps that he reigns supreme and alone in the harem. Naturally he is the idol of his wives, for upon him depend their happiness, their luxuries and indulgences; whilst the facile law of divorce makes them careful to cultivate the charms of amiability, and avoid offence. Amongst the best and highest classes divorces are infrequent. When the master is in the harem he does not like to be disturbed: such a reply is equivalent to your 'Not at home.' As far as we are concerned to-day, it does not matter; I can come and go here as I please. If the Sheykh knew of our visit, he would hasten to us; but we will not intrude upon him."

We were in an old Mameluke palace, and everything was of magnificent proportions. The open hall was large and imposing. Above the balustrade rose rare and ancient columns, supporting fine horse-shoe arches decorated with arabesques and other curious designs in rich but subdued colours. Seats and divans stood about, whilst two or three turbaned attendants kept watch and ward, recognising us with a deep Oriental salutation, but taking no further notice of our approach. This hall looked on to the courtyard, with its palms and mushrabeeyeh windows, all open to the blue sky. An Oriental screen of superb workmanship divided it from the chambers beyond. A fine dado of various coloured marbles lined the lower part of the walls. The ceiling was magnificently painted.

From this we passed into the reception kiosk, a splendid apartment richly decorated. The floor was paved with delicate marbles, upon which here and there Oriental rugs were thrown; and the lofty ceiling was exquisitely carved, painted, and gilded. Arabesque decorations on the walls almost rivalled the beauties of the Alhambra. The room was almost bare of furniture, and seemed only the more effective and imposing: nothing small or trivial arrested the eye. Windows large and deep, had their recesses fitted up with soft luxurious couches, suggestive of repose. The highest panes, of coloured glass, threw a rich glow upon the room. Wide and lofty proportions made it stately and dignified in the extreme; an effect which no doubt had a corresponding influence upon the minds of those who habitually dwelt there.

As we were looking and admiring, and Osman was pointing out certain subtle and artistic beauties, we heard an approaching footstep. Turning, the master of the house stood before us—a venerable sheykh of some seventy years, but of firm and upright bearing. His turban allowed a little of his hair to be seen; it was white as snow, yet his eye was keen and piercing as that of youth. It seemed that he might go on to four-score years, and still the labour and sorrow of age would be far off. The face was of the highest type, calm and magnificent; a face that might have sat for Abraham. It was full of intellect, and his massive brow seemed a very temple of thought.



PLACE ROUMELEH, AND MOSQUE OF HASSAN.

Overjoyed at seeing Osman, his pleasure was not shown by any undue warmth of welcome. The Egyptian temperament, especially amongst the highest class, seems to forbid any great unbending. Approaching, he gave the Eastern salutation, placing his fingers to his forehead, lips, and breast, meaning that his guest dwelt in thought, word, and heart. Then turning to us, without waiting for any introduction, he went through the same ceremony, and we duly responded. After this, slightly clapping his hands, an attendant appeared; coffee was ordered, and the attendant retired. We thought again of the 'Arabian Nights,' where things and people appeared and disappeared by magic, at the control of him who held the lamp, or gave the cabalistic sign.

Our salutation ended, our host approached Osman, and holding out both hands, grasped his in a manner far more European than Oriental. Then, a little to our surprise, he spoke in excellent English —we so seldom heard English spoken by the Egyptians.

"A bird of the air told me of your visit," he said; "but the bird reached me by accident. I could almost upbraid you for not sending for me, only that I know your consideration for others. I should so have regretted not seeing you. Our meetings are now so rare—and you dwell so much in my heart and mind. Ah, those happy days, when I was your father's chief friend, and you as a child sat upon my knee, and the hours were golden because I thought that youth would be everlasting! Your father was to go long before me, but for me he lives again in his son."

His voice was deep and penetrating, yet soft and clear; his tones were measured; he possessed the high-bred air which belongs only to those whose surroundings have been courtly and elevated. Osman in a few words introduced us, and explained that on our way to the Mosques, he had stopped to show us his remarkable house.

"You are indeed welcome," gravely responded our host. "Your visit confers an honour upon me. Would that I could give you more extended hospitality. Dinner to-night, or——"

But this our engagements compelled us to decline. Speaking, we had approached the centre of the room, and stood where the marble floor was sunk to a depth of about six inches, and a circumference of some twelve feet, the lower section paved with a fine mosaic. But so spacious was the room that the hollow seemed lost within it. As we looked, suddenly a fountain threw up its perfumed waters, and the cool plash of the falling spray sent forth a delightful echo. Almost at the same moment, a "slave of the lamp" brought in coffee, which was served in the usual small cups reposing in their exquisite filigree holders. Our host conducted us to the raised end of the room, the Leewan, or place of honour. Here small rich carpets were thrown upon the floor, and the recesses were filled up with seductive cushions. And here we sat and drank our Egyptian coffee in true Egyptian form. It was essentially a room for reception, not for ordinary

INTERIOR OF A HOUSE.

habitation. There was a great deal of exquisite carving about the walls, and brackets held rare ornaments, but the accommodation for sitting or siesta was limited.

"I am broad-minded enough to wish that I could show you even my harem," said our host, with a grave smile, "for as strangers it would be a new experience to you. But that is impossible. The very word itself, as you no doubt know, means the forbidden, or the unapproachable. Even my friend Osman, who for his father's sake no less than for his own, is dear as a son to me, has never been admitted within those sacred walls. And I can imagine the terror of the inmates if I so far forgot myself as to introduce you. Our Eastern customs are peculiar in your eyes, no doubt, but believe me, the ladies of the harem are not unhappy, and I think that if a change of life and habits were put to the vote by the women of Egypt, it would not be carried. They have many enjoyments, many luxuries, few wishes ungratified, and in their own domain absolute freedom. Their outdoor liberty is restricted, but the human heart, with its wonderful power of adaptation, soon ceases to wish for the unattainable."

We had much to see and do, and soon had to bid our host farewell. He conducted us with grave dignity to his very threshold, and there took leave, commending himself to our remembrance and begging for a repetition of the visit: a pleasure to ourselves, as it turned out, not to be fulfilled.

"He is a man in ten thousand," said Osman, as we rattled through the thoroughfares, "as you will have discovered even in our short interview. My father had the highest opinion of his wisdom and integrity. Though never a member of the political world, or anything but what in England you would call a 'private gentleman,' many time my father sought his counsel and followed his advice. He was perhaps the only man ever so honoured, for my father was more accustomed to make laws and assert his own opinions than allow others in the least degree to influence him."

We were bound for the Mosque of Kalaoon, and were steering northward. To reach it, we purposely made a détour to pass through the bazaars, the carriage setting us down at the principal entrance gate, and going round to meet us. Within the large portal, built by El-Ghoree, was of course a motley crowd of Egyptians and Europeans, many of the latter on donkeys, and of the ordinary tourist type. The bazaar was even more thronged than usual, for it was a market day, and things were being sold by auction; the delláls struggling through the market, and calling out the sum offered for a particular article, endeavouring to get higher bid. The articles were of the usual description; swords and slippers, rich embroideries, soft and flowing silks and Eastern carpets, silver daggers massively sheathed, each possessing a history and a pedigree, all mingling their charms and puzzling the judgment of an admiring purchaser. Amidst this *embarras de richesses*, the tourist hardly knows

STUDENTS : MOSQUE OF EL-AZHAR.

which to add to his collection of curiosities, and often ends in choosing unwisely.

We passed out of this into the bazaar or market of the coppersmiths, where a great deal of fine and really artistic brass-work was to be seen. Much of it was hand-wrought and *repoussé*. And here, in this market-place, almost side by side, we found the Mosques of Kalaoon, Barkook and En-Nasr, outrivalling each other.

The Mosque of Sultan Kalaoon was founded in 1287. There are two mosques of that name, one being a mausoleum, and they formed part of the once celebrated and prosperous *Muristán*, the *Bethlehem* and hospital built by Kalaoon. These are two of the most interesting mosques in Cairo, though a certain gloomy, creepy, poverty-stricken air hangs about them, arising perhaps more from the people who visit the mosques than from the buildings themselves. In point of fact, the Mosque of Kalaoon is one of the most richly endowed. But the passage leading to the mosques is long, narrow and ill-conditioned, and they are in painfully close quarters. The market-place is crowded with booths, buyers and sellers; a great noise is frequently going on; no atmosphere of stateliness and repose surrounds them as it surrounds so many of the mosques of Cairo. It is all very unromantic, yet one of the best pictures of Eastern life to be found in this Eastern city.

The market-place is thronged; the wonderful hat of the European mingling ludicrously with the close-fitting, picturesque turban of the Egyptian. Donkeys are in great force, and the air is full of sounds that are certainly not melody; the shrill cry of the donkey-boy joining in with the harsh rasp of the copper merchant. The latter tries to raise his voice above his neighbour's, assuring you of the superiority of his wares. He is often right. You are more sure of your purchase in the copper market than in almost any other bazaar.

The gold and silversmiths are close by. Their wares are more costly, but not always as genuine as those of the copper market. Yet their filigree work is often exquisite, and is sold by weight, a very small charge being made for the wonderful hand-work. At each end of the copper market is a narrow street, through which the crowds constantly come and go in slow-moving streams.

Out of all this you turn into the narrow passage leading to the Mosque of Kalaoon: passing at once into comparative solitude. But the people you see are not often interesting: sick folk for the most part, frequenting the Mosque of Kalaoon for its life-giving, sickness-healing reputation. Into this we also passed somewhat carefully, for the atmosphere was not altogether ethereal. With the exception of the mosque itself, there was a hospital air about the place, suggestive of fever and disease, of rooms close and dark and confined, sufficient in themselves to breed malaria. The immense building is going to ruin and destruction. Cells once occupied by lunatics are now in possession of the coppersmiths, who here make

THE HOUR OF PRAYER.

their beautiful work, not in the least influenced by the thought of all the madness and delirium which the old walls witnessed in days gone by.

Sultan Kalaoon was originally a Mameluke slave of extraordinary beauty, and is said to have been sold by the merchant who brought him from Turkestan for 1000 dinars. He began his reign in 1279 and died in 1290: having in eleven years become great and popular. Kalaoon was of the Baharite Mameluke dynasty, and one of the best of his race. His victories were numerous. He defeated the troublesome and powerful Mongolians, and recaptured Damascus, the loss of which had so affected the Egyptians. He triumphed in the Crusades, and succeeded in almost every undertaking. During his reign wars were constantly going on, yet the country prospered. He was unscrupulous in obtaining his ends, considering all things fair in war, yet he never neglected the welfare of the people. He was learned in the art of medicine, and did everything in his power to advance the science and alleviate suffering. The Muristán which he founded was one of the largest and most complete institutions the world has seen. Few monarchs have left a more benevolent record of their reign behind them. There was a separate ward for every known disease, and the number of officials employed was enormous. A large lecture hall was attached to the building, which was always crowded with students. The origin of the hospital is said to have been a thank-offering on the part of Kalaoon. During his Syrian conquests he was taken dangerously ill at Damascus, was nursed and cured in the hospital, and vowed to found a similar one on his return to Cairo. The existing hospitals were small and insufficient, and Kalaoon built his upon new and magnificent lines, in a manner worthy of his promise.

The high walls of the mosque are imposing, with their alternately red and white lines. The minaret at the north-east corner is very fine, but a little too massive in construction. It is therefore less graceful than many of the minarets of Cairo, and seems to have been built rather to defy time than with any great regard to beauty and refinement. With due care the buildings might have lasted many an age yet to come; but neglected, they are fast going to ruin and decay. The old kitchen, which is still worth visiting, formed, as it were, the centre of the immense buildings, and round it all the numerous wards radiated. This kitchen was an important part of the charity, and several officials were employed solely in the task of choosing its provisions.

The minaret to which we have referred is formed by a base of three squares one above the other, unequal in diameter, with an octagonal terrace, surmounted by a cylindrical drum sculptured in fine arabesques, with a second circular terrace above. The whole is crowned by an *ovoid*, in the form of an egg, upon which gleams the crescent.

Out of the crowd and confusion of the market-place we passed into a new world when we entered the mosque. The proportions struck one at once as being large, lofty, and imposing. It was divided by six pillars in double rows of three, supporting pointed arches of great beauty. The capitals were beautifully finished and ornamented with divided leaves finely sculptured in imitation of the Corinthian capitals found in Roman buildings. The pillars are painted green, the capitals yellow, a startling effect happily subdued by the well-toned light. The side columns of the kibleh support a magnificent horseshoe arch; the kibleh itself being ornamented with rows of graceful colonnettes, fine arabesques and gilded mosaic.

The tomb-chamber is in far better preservation than the rest of the buildings. The tomb itself is protected by a screen of carved wood. Around this are four massive piers and four granite pillars supporting an octagonal superstructure with pointed arches. The catafalque is simple in form, and near it rests a large urn elevated on an inverted pyramid. In the room is preserved a silk shawl and a leathern belt worn by the Sultan, supposed to cure diseases.

The pillars of the prayer niche are also supposed to be miraculous, and are the constant resort of invalids. Mothers here bring their children for their tongues to be "loosened." The charm consists in squeezing a lemon upon a large stone in the chamber near one of the windows. This is rubbed with a smaller stone, and as soon as it turns red with the action of the acid, the unhappy infant is made to suck the stone, with the result that its voice, if not its tongue, is loosened with great effect.

At certain times women visit the prayer niche and implore that their wishes may be granted or their diseases cured. Suddenly a woman may be seen to divest herself of her outer garments and begin to dance and jump vigorously from side to side until at length she falls to the ground, prostrate and unconscious. The windows of the mausoleum have very fine and delicate tracery, and in form are very Romanesque. The lower part of the walls was covered with mosaics in marble.

Next to the Mosque of Kalaoon comes the Mosque of En-Nasr, with its marble portal of clustered pillars and its pointed Gothic arch, the only example of the kind in Cairo. This mosque was brought from Acre, after its destruction, by El-Ashraf as a trophy of victory. The interior is not interesting excepting for its very fine Arabian stucco-work, and the beautiful tracery adorning the arch above the Kibleh though it is built very much on the lines of the Mosque of Hassan II.

The third and last Mosque, that of Barkook, is also uninteresting, excepting its black and white marble portal and bronze door. It was built at the close of the fourteenth century, at a moment when architecture was not occupying very much attention in Egypt.

The wife of Barkook reposes in the tomb-chamber, and also his daughter, Fatmeh: death, indeed, in the midst of life: none of the solemn silence and mystery of the tombs of the Caliphs: none of the majesty of the Pyramids: yet what many would prefer as a last resting-place. As we know, Barkook himself reposes amidst the Caliph tombs in a mausoleum that has scarcely its equal. The minarets of the mosque in the copper-market are painted red and white, like those of En-Nasr and Kalaoon.

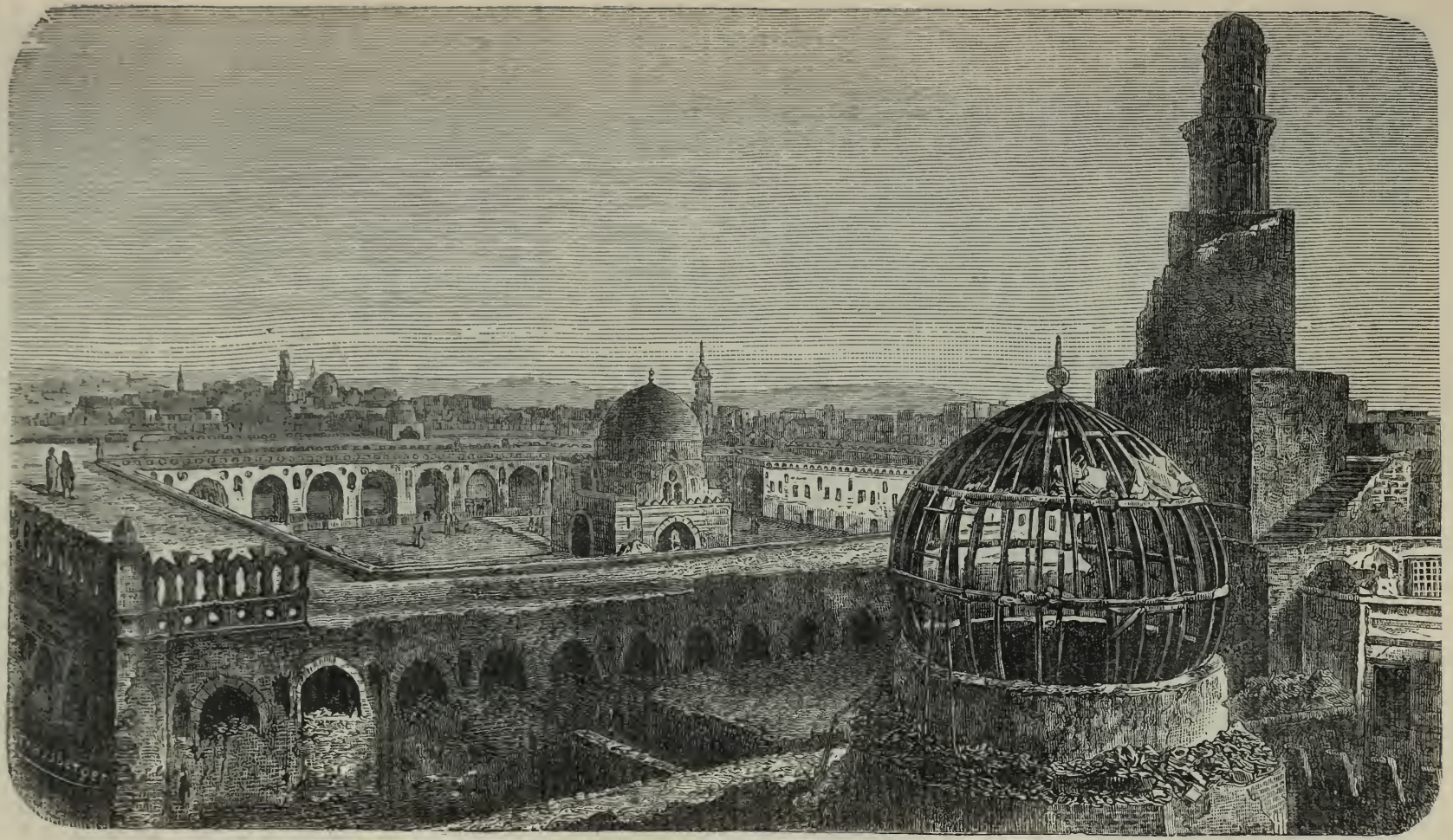
Leaving this immediate neighbourhood, where mosques crowd upon each other, in a very few minutes we found ourselves at the Mosque of El-Azhar. It is called "the splendid Mosque," but is so surrounded by houses that very little of the exterior can be seen, beyond its six minarets. This mosque was first built in the year 970, but nothing of the original remains. The mosque has six gates: the Soup Gate, the Gate of the Upper Egyptians, the Syrian Gate, the Gate of the West Africans, the Gate Gohariyeh and the Gate of the Barbers: the latter so called because within it many students may be seen undergoing the process of head-shaving.

The court is immense, but yet larger is the sanctuary, with its three hundred and eighty columns divided into nine ranges, amongst which one feels almost lost. It is full of repose and a subdued light. More than twelve hundred lamps are suspended from the low ceiling, but it was not our good fortune to see it lighted up. The effect must be very imposing. The pillars are of marble, porphyry, and granite, and many of the bases and capitals were taken for the purpose from ancient Roman buildings.

The great court has no fountain, which is replaced by cisterns for the necessary washing before worship. The surrounding colonnades support very high brick walls of immense weight, covered with a thick layer of plaster of enormous strength and hardness, and ornamented with stucco-work. Here, under the colonnades and in the court, on mattings, poor Mussulmans are allowed to repose during the night.

Attached to the mosque is the largest and most important university in the East, with a staff of over three hundred professors and some ten thousand students.

More striking than the vastness of the building, the countless columns, is the sight of innumerable students, sitting upon the ground in groups, learning and reciting their lessons. Heads sway to and fro in all directions, and a murmur fills the air, professors are standing up in cap and gown, laying down the law, giving instruction to those who listen open mouthed. Some of the students look interested and intelligent, others are dull and heavy, and, it is easy to see, will never become brilliant lights. Every nation and sect has its particular quarter, every quarter its inspector; above all is the general administrator, called the Sheykh El-Azhar. Here will be a section all Turks there all Syrians, and so on: whilst one section is given up wholly to teaching the blind.



RUINED MOSQUE OF TOOLOON.

The education is comprehensive and both primary and secondary. Grammar, algebra, arithmetic, logic, philosophy, and theology are all taught. Mohammedan religion and law are taught according to the four different rites of the Sunnees: the Shafeite, the Malakite, the Hanafite and the Hambalite. Of these the Shafeites are the most numerous, the Hambalites very much in the minority. Many of the students are very poor. To these is made a distribution of bread every other day, and a certain amount of oil for the "student's lamp:" the "midnight oil" we all are too fond of burning. Besides this, a small monthly sum is given to each poor student, just sufficient to enable him to supply his most pressing needs.

The yearly expenses of the university amount to six hundred thousand piastres, a portion of which is paid by Government. The remainder is made up chiefly from endowments.

Of all the different sects, the blind are the most fanatical, as if want of vision produced narrowness of mind. The professors are scarcely paid, and have to support themselves chiefly by giving private lessons, or filling some religious office. The wealthier students also make them frequent presents. The Sheykh El-Azhar alone receives a stipend, amounting to ten thousand piastres.

The professors teach standing, or sitting cross-legged on matting, their book before them reposing on a desk. The pupils sit round him in a circle, and, as he reads, take copious notes. They begin their education by learning the Arabic grammar. From this they pass on to religious science; and then proceed to the science of religious and secular law. Much attention is given to logic, rhetoric, and poetry. Elocution is also taught so far as concerns the reciting of the Koran.

The students remain three, four, or six years at the University, and have to pass examinations in all the subjects before receiving a diploma. Their intellectual work never rises above a certain level. They accept their knowledge as it is given to them, without questioning, without enlightened or original thought: there is no creative power even amongst their professors, who, having risen to the foremost places, might be supposed to be far above the average. Great learning many of them do possess, but it is very mechanical, and leads to no higher results, no new departure. Scientific, in the highest sense, they are not. Natural history, geometry, algebra, astronomy—these branches are neglected. Yet it was specially in these that the Ancient Arabs excelled.

Their lectures are delivered in a sing-song tone, in itself monotonous and uninspiring. The professor generally leans against a pillar, or sits on a mat close to the pillars, an equivalent to the professor's chair of our Western universities. The students take notes, providing themselves with *Kuras* for the purpose—ten pieces of paper fastened together; and they write with a reed pen, laying their Kura on the palm of the left hand. During the intervals from study, the

courts of the mosque become lively with conversation. The students group themselves about. The water-seller comes in with his metal cups and curious skin. Pedlars are trying to drive bargains; visitors are freely admitted, and amongst them may here and there be seen a woman, closely veiled. At midday the muezzin is suddenly heard summoning the faithful, and all hasten to the open court and the cisterns, where the slight but prescribed washing is gone through, preparatory to the midday prayer. All bow the head towards the Kiblah, and for a time silence reigns.

Learning is one of the first conditions of the Islam creed; just as the certainty of Retribution is one of its canons. "A man must know everything, and remain ignorant of nothing," is one of their sayings. "Learn magic, but do not practise it," is another; which appears almost an equivalent to the more beautiful and perfect words of our Lord: "Be ye wise as serpents, but harmless as doves." "Men are either learners or learned, and he who belongs to neither class is good for nothing," is an ancient Arabian proverb. Whilst over the principal gate of El-Azhar, the Gate of the Barbers, are the words: "Actions shall be judged by their motives, and every man shall be rewarded according to the motives of his heart."

The professors set a good example. They are badly paid, in some cases not paid at all, and the very spirit of their work is an earnest desire to do good. "Fakree, Fahree" is their motto: "My poverty is my pride;" and very poor and very contented are they for the most part. Their students come from and return to all parts of the Islam world: from the Coast of Morocco on the one side to the Islands of the Indian Archipelago on the other; and within the vast walls of El-Azhar is acquired a great part of the learning which goes far to keeping alive the traditions of Mohammedanism.

This visit to the Mosque-University of El-Azhar is one of the most interesting experiences of Cairo. Hours, nay days, may be spent here by those who understand the language, who care to listen to the various lectures, and watch the intellectual processes. It is a study of character, and probably in no assemblage in the world could be found so great a variety of types and intelligence; so strange a contradiction of opinions and sects, yet all having the same end and aim. In one way we might imitate them with advantage: there is no schism amongst them. Side by side will stand two professors, their voices mingling, themselves excellent friends; yet one—metaphorically—will be telling his pupils that the road to be taken is on the right, the other that it lies to the left.

More picturesque but less interesting than El-Azhar, was the Mosque of El-Ghoree. It stands out in a broader thoroughfare, and its high walls are very imposing. Opposite to it is the mosque of the same name, which was once a Sebel and Medreseh, or seat of learning. Few spots in Cairo are more picturesque. The lofty walls facing each other are magnificent, very harmonious in effect, and

between them moves an ever restless crowd in every variety of dress. Driving becomes almost impossible.

The mosque on the west side is of great beauty and charm. The interior is planned very much after that of Kaitbey; possibly because El-Ghoree had once been a slave to the Sultan Kaitbey; and may have had happy recollections of his youth, or of his present exalted position in comparison with his youth, which he thus wished to memorialise.

El-Ghoree was upwards of sixty when he ascended the throne, and was still full of life and energy. His reign of fifteen years was one of constant action, of many reforms and improvements. He was a great lover of splendour, and surrounded himself with every mark of wealth, everything that was great and gorgeous. He possessed the finest stud of horses; the richest collections of precious gems; his dinner service was of pure gold; and he greatly patronised poetry and the fine arts. Of music he was an especial lover. At the same time he was not popular. In order to carry out his numerous reforms: building fortifications, mosques, and schools, constructing roads and canals: he laid burdens upon the people which they were ill-fitted to bear. In this matter he became tyrannical. This, in conjunction with the discovery of the Cape route to India by the Portuguese, to the great injury of the trade of Egypt, brought sorrow upon the country.

Still El-Ghoree went on reigning more or less brilliantly, until, whilst fighting against the army of Selim I., that terrible sultan of the Ottomans, on the Plains of Dabik, he fell down in a fit of apoplexy, and was slain by his followers.

The mosque he built is worthy of his love of grandeur. The inlaid floors are magnificent, and the roof is richly decorated. The walls are covered with arabesques and broad bands of red Cufic inscription. The various marbles used in decoration are rare and beautiful. None of the original splendour remains, but the colours and gilding must have been very gorgeous. Here and there on the sculptured arches traces may still be found, from which one may faintly imagine the effect of its early magnificence.

In none of the mosques bearing his name does the body of El-Ghoree repose. After his death his head was decapitated and sent as a trophy to Selim I.

Scarcely less interesting was the ever-moving crowd passing between these magnificent and majestic walls, which though built nearly four hundred years ago seem but of yesterday. Every variety of costume was there; it was sufficiently lively for and almost resembled a carnival. The poor water-carrier had hard work to make way with his water-skin, and his clanking cups had to be silent. Nowhere did we see a more truly Oriental scene, or one that so completely made us feel in Eastern climes. Only Cairo, with its wonderful possibilities, could present such an *ensemble:* at once crowded and varied, full of life and movement, majestic in its surroundings.

"We will now visit the oldest mosque in Cairo—the Mosque of Tooloon," said Osman. "It is one of the most interesting, both from its size and antiquity. The most ancient of all is of course that of Amer or Amrou, in *Old* Cairo. But they are all wonderful, these mosques! Where will you find so many magnificent religious buildings crowding upon each other, and all possessing the singular charm of Arabian architecture? From the tenth to the sixteenth century, the Egyptians had no rest from building. Every sultan was ambitious of leaving a memorial of his reign, for they had great ideas of a name handed down to posterity. Strange that so many of them should have been tyrants and despots, given up to everything that was evil. All possessed elements of greatness, but could not be true to their better nature. Nowhere," he continued, "was Arabian art brought to such excellence as in Cairo. The great examples to be found elsewhere are few and far between. But the day will come when even in Cairo few traces will remain of this grand school, which appeals so much to the imagination."

"With all its grandeur, it is always one and the same school," we remarked. "This almost seems to mark a want of creative power in the architects of the past."

"Rather they were restrained by Mohammedan influence," returned Osman, "always a great enemy to independent and original thought. But there are three types of mosques, and they are very distinct, though I admit that each succeeding type was a progression rather than a new creation. The earliest type was characterised by its large open court, its arcades and roofed colonnades, by rows of columns supporting pointed arches. Such is the Mosque of Amer. Succeeding types were more gorgeous, more full of detail, never more simply and grandly beautiful and imposing. The second type made its courts smaller; the refined and beautiful arcades—which somewhat resembled the cloisters of our Western cathedrals, and perhaps were the primary cause of their origin—gave place to square niches, very imposing in their way but of less architectural merit. This change took place under the Mameluke dynasty. Of these the Mosque of Hassan, which we first saw by moonlight, is the best example. The third type, and the one which pleases me least, is in the Turkish style, and was brought from Constantinople. More and more the Turkish influence has made itself felt in Egypt—not always for good. But the mosques of this last period have their merit, as you must have admitted when you first saw the Mosque of Mohammed Ali above the citadel. Its magnificent expanse, its wealth of colouring and decoration, its lofty dome and slender minarets almost rival the fabulous structures of the 'Arabian Nights.' I don't know a more splendid and imposing sight than a night of Ramadan, when the mosque is brilliantly illuminated with those myriads of hanging lamps, and a crowd of worshippers are bending low with their faces towards Mecca. It would be impossible to surpass the richness with which the

Mameluke sultans adorned their mosques; not only in painting, but in material. Nothing was too costly for them, and porphyry, jasper, turquoise, rare marbles, ivory, and mother-of-pearl were unsparingly used. Upon all a subdued light was thrown by their wonderful coloured glass."

SANCTUARY: MOSQUE OF TOOLOON.

With talking, with so many objects and people of interest to engage the attention on all sides, the drive from El-Ghoree to the Mosque of Tooloon on the southern side of the city, between the citadel and the canal, passed as a dream. It is difficult now to

realise the extreme beauty of the building in its original state, perhaps one of the finest of its kind the world has seen. The outer walls were high and magnificent, and of unusual strength, to protect the quietness of the interior; but the arches have been filled in and their beauty destroyed; the arcades have been divided into cells, which are occupied by troublesome beggars and the extreme poor. Once the immense court was surrounded by magnificent arcades; but these too have been filled in, and poverty-stricken, whitewashed walls meet the eye.

Still much that is beautiful remains, and by what is, one can imagine what has been. The mosque does not properly belong to Cairo, for it existed before the earliest foundation of the city. Cairo has come to it, and has grown around it. The city was founded in 969; the mosque in 879: a fact witnessed by two Cufic inscriptions upon the walls of the court. It is said to have been constructed on the lines of the mosque at Mecca.

The interior is very simple: an immense square open court, surrounded on three sides by three ranges of piers, forming a double portico with arcades; and on the fourth or east side, five ranges of pillars, forming five series of naves or arcades. This is the sanctuary. In the end wall are innumerable small pointed windows, finely sculptured. The walls, piers, and arches are all built of brick covered with a very hard cement or stucco. The pointed arches are very graceful, slightly depressed at the base. Between each large arch is a small window of ironwork. The whole is crowned by a frieze ornamented with light arabesques, now very much in ruin. The inscription of the interior frieze is in Cufic characters. Nothing can be more light and graceful than these wonderful and matchless arcades, with their delicate ornamentations. From certain points of observation, the view of these innumerable pillars and arcades cutting and interlacing each other until lost in a distant perspective is one of the greatest architectural delights to be found in Cairo. The roof with its open timber-work and octagonal recesses, once rested on 108 rectangular pillars.

In the centre of the great court—which is 100 yards square—is a large domed building now used as a fountain, but originally intended as a tomb for the Sultan Tooloon. Like the rest of the mosque it is now very much in ruins. But perhaps the most ruined portion is its curious minaret rising from the exterior wall. Its singularity consists in an outside winding staircase, of which the following is the legend:

It is said that the Sultan was one day absently twirling a piece of paper round his finger, when his Grand Vizier observed it was a pity that he had not something better to do with his time. "Not at all," replied the Sultan. "My mind is working out an idea. It has occurred to me that I should like to build a minaret with an outside staircase, on which I could mount to the summit on horseback."

Accordingly the minaret was built in a very substantial form: a

strong, square base, on which rested a cylindrical tower, ending in an octagon. The staircase is now so ruined that with difficulty we reached the top, where, however, we were rewarded with a fine view over the neighbourhood: a crowd of narrow streets and houses, a small but picturesque fruit-market, thronged with Arabians. The houses look old and dilapidated, and their flat roofs stretch far and wide; in the distance the domes and minarets of other mosques are outlined against the clear blue sky.

Tooloon himself had a prosperous and popular reign. He was the founder of the Tooloonites, which seemed to promise a long and brilliant existence; yet twenty-two years after his death it all came to an end. From being Governor of Egypt, he succeeded in declaring himself monarch. His wealth was supposed to be fabulous, his love of magnificence and display was unbounded: a weakness shared by so many Sultans. His was the Mohammedan Period. In war he was always successful, extending his kingdom as far as Mesopotamia. Having shaken off the yoke of Bagdad, the rolling years turned the wheel of fortune downwards; he was proclaimed a rebel by the Abbaside Khalif of Bagdad, fled to Syria, and there died of disease in 884. His body was never recovered, and in the tomb in the centre of his mosque has never reposed.

A legend declares that the mosque is built on the very site on which Abraham offered up the goat in sacrifice in place of his son. Another legend has it that here the Ark rested after the Flood, though the Mohammedans for the most part say that it rested on Mount Jûdi in Syria. It is sad to see the mosque in its present whitewashed, ruined condition, fast disappearing under the hands of time. The heathen temples on the banks of the Nile, the Great Pyramids themselves, were built of material to defy the ages; but many of these mosques were constructed of more perishable substance, and the result is a sad decadence.

Yet there was a certain charm about the mosque, whilst the sanctuary itself, with its innumerable pillars and pointed arches, is perhaps unrivalled in any of the Mosques of Cairo. It all spoke plainly and sadly and eloquently of a past age: but everywhere we read the same lesson: perhaps more emphatically in Egypt than elsewhere: that the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them pass away, and to every country in turn comes the handwriting upon the wall.

From the Mosque of Tooloon we presently passed into the more open thoroughfare lying between Old and New Cairo, where you soon come to the windings of the Nile, and a distant view of the eternal Pyramids.

The Mosque of Amrou is situated near the east end of Old Cairo, near the rubbish heaps which distinguish but do not adorn these quarters. Forlorn and wretched, poverty-stricken and abandoned they look, a fitting home for starving dogs and prowling jackals,

SANCTUARY : MOSQUE OF AMROU.

though the latter seldom venture upon haunts so near the habitations of man. Outside the walls of the mosque a large pottery fair or market was spread upon the ground, and near it sellers of the sugar-cane were waiting patiently for customers, breaking the long canes over their heads. For a small sum one might have carried away any amount of really artistic pottery, beautiful in design and colouring; outlines that have been handed down from the early ages, upon which improvement would be difficult.

The Mosque of Amrou is the oldest of all the mosques, and so far the most interesting. It dates from the year 21 of the Hegira. The outer walls are of brick; the interior is very similar to the Mosque of Tooloon, with a large open court and colonnades: a single line at the west end, the point of entrance: three deep on the north and south sides, and six deep at the east end: a total of some 230 columns.

It was the only mosque existing in Fostat, or Old Cairo, during the period of the four first Caliphs and the Ommiades. This, as we know, was the Mohammedan period ushered in upon the downfall of the Byzantines.

Owing to its antiquity, the Mosque of Amrou is almost the most celebrated in existence. Eighty of Mahomet's companions are said to have assisted at its construction; and the Kibla was now first placed in the direction of Mecca. In the year 53 of the Hegira the son of the then Governor of Egypt extended the mosque eastward, and for the first time minarets were erected for the muezzins: one at each of the four corners of the mosque.

Egypt at this period was flourishing. Alexandria was the most important of commercial cities; Ashmûnen in Upper Egypt was famous for its cloth factories; Tinis for weaving and gold embroideries; other cities, including Alexandria, for brocades and cloth of gold; the Fayum for its canvas, Gireb for carpets, Taha for its pottery. Thus the trade and commerce of Egypt in those days were very much what they might be in these: the same manufactures, the same productions. In some of their handiwork they reached a degree of excellence which died with them.

The entrance to the mosque is under the centre minaret. The doorway is in the form of a trefoil, above which is a small pointed window. The interior now consists of nothing but the immense open court with its surrounding colonnades. In the centre is the fountain, overshadowed by a large and graceful palm-tree, and near it a small but more spreading thorn. The columns are all in marble, each of one solid block. The capitals are of every imaginable form and school of architecture, including the Corinthian, the Ionic, the Byzantine, and even the capital of the Ptolemaic period reproduced by Greek artists. But all signs of Egyptian art were rejected as heathenish. Many of the pillars were brought from the ancient cities of Egypt, and in past ages had adorned the temples of Memphis, Heliopolis, and a hundred other cities. The perspective of

OUTSIDE CAIRO.

the sanctuary, like that of Tooloon, with its innumerable columns and arcades and pointed arches, is extremely fine. The whole mosque, indeed, is imposing from its size and simplicity. Near the Menhir is a column marked with a white vein, of which the following is the legend:

The Caliph Omar was not only Commander of the Faithful; he was learned in magic. One day, whilst pacing the galleries of the mosque at Mecca, he bethought himself of the Mosque of Amrou, and turned his face towards Cairo. As in a vision, he saw his lieutenant giving orders to the workmen occupied in constructing the Mosque of Amrou. At that moment they were raising a column near the kiblah. Omar saw that it was badly sculptured, and out of the perpendicular. He turned towards one of the pillars near him, and commanded it to transport itself to Cairo and take the place of the defective column. The pillar slightly trembled, then became immovable again. Omar now pushed it with his hand and repeated his command. Again the pillar trembled and turned, but remained stationary. Omar now became angry, struck the pillar with his staff, and cried: "In the name of God, most High and most Merciful, I command you to go!"

"Why did you before forget to invoke the aid of the Almighty?" gently reproved the column; and so saying took its flight and placed itself in front of the kiblah in the Mosque of Amrou. The white vein is the spot on which Omar struck it in his anger.

In the western portico are a pair of pillars very close together, and it is said that only believers can pass between them. Thus it is evident that the followers of the Prophet associated stoutness with sinful indulgence: a sweeping condemnation.

A very subdued light, full of repose, reigns in the sanctuary of the Mosque of Amrou; chequered shadows fall upon the pavement, which is further adorned by a number of ragged mats, probably used as prayer-carpets by the faithful. But the mosque is little frequented; few now come here to worship; its glory has departed; many of its pillars are overthrown. It was once great and flourishing. A wealth of colouring and gilding once adorned its walls; 1290 copies of the Koran reposed on an equal number of desks; 18,000 lamps gave their magnificent light and effect, when the sun went down. It is difficult to conceive the splendour of the spectacle.

To-day all has passed away, and imagination is left to fill in the picture as best it may. It is said that although the present mosque stands on the site of the mosque first built, very little of the original remains. It may be so, but the visit is none the less interesting; and we left it feeling that we must return to it again.

Later in the day we all three found ourselves, towards the hour of sunset, upon the battlements of the citadel in front of the wonderful and magnificent Mosque of Mohamet Ali. Before us stretched the matchless view already described, but never too often brought home

to the reader. At our feet lay the great Eastern city of flat roofs, of mosques and minarets, all visible, all touched by the magic of the setting sun. Beyond were the windings of the sacred river; in the distance uprose in majestic outlines, full of the grandeur of repose, the great Pyramids of Ghizeh: tomb-chambers of kings who do not sleep there. Stretching far beyond them, far beyond all human vision, was the boundless desert. Over all was the sky of evening, flushed with gorgeous colours, the sun disappearing in a sea of gold. Rays and flames seemed to dart from the horizon to the very zenith of the heavens. The gates of Paradise might have been opened, discovering for a moment celestial visions. The view surpassed all we had ever seen.

"I never look upon this," said Osman, in dreamy, far-off tones, "without thinking of that passage in your Bible: 'All the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them.' No other view I ever saw comes so near the description. It is a fitting close to a day spent amongst the sacred buildings of the past. And now, as yesterday, I claim you. We need mental and physical rest; an unbending after our varied emotions. We will go back to our rooms, where dinner, to harmonise with our day's experiences, shall be as refined as art can make it. But we shall have no moonlight effects, unless you wish to return to the Tombs of the Caliphs. You shall make my coffee, just as last night, or rather this morning, I made yours. And if we do not exercise magic, like the Caliph Omar, at least we can talk of it. Now come—let us away."

The sun had set, the light was fading from the sky; soon, very soon, darkness would fall, the gates of paradise close; better depart whilst a little glory yet remained. And, also, with such a host, what was left but to obey?

A DANGEROUS EXPERIMENT.

I.

"RORO, do you want anything in town, I am going in this afternoon?" asked the Squire's young wife, as she sat at breakfast one June morning.

"No, thanks, little woman; but what may you be going to do there?"

"I want some lace, and I have promised to see Mrs. Ireson."

"Why do you go to that woman, Katie, when you know I don't like it?" asked the Squire, in a slow rather sleepy voice.

"Oh, you don't really mind, and I'm not asking you to come," replied his wife, bringing him a cup of coffee and giving him a kiss at the same time.

They were very much in love with each other, these two, for all that they had been married nearly two years. She was the tiniest little creature, slight, fair and very pretty; healthy in body, though nervous, quick-tempered, and passionate. Clever, too, and with a strong will of her own that had been fostered and strengthened by the circumstances of her life. The only child of adoring parents, she had domineered alike over them, her relations, servants, and indeed all who came near her. A bright, gay, happy disposition and a tender loving heart had prevented her from being spoilt as she must otherwise have been. When Squire Bransome came home from his tour round the world, he too went down at her tiny feet, and it being a case, on both sides, of love at first sight, there was every prospect of their future happiness.

He was a tall man and broad in proportion, with a handsome if rather massive head, and well-formed limbs. He was some ten years older than his wife, who had just passed her twentieth year. Katie would tell you that, in character, he was a darling old softie, too lazy to stir more than he was obliged to, perfectly happy with her, and quite content to let her wind him around her little finger. Outsiders would tell a different story. His strength was proverbial, and he was counted the best shot and keenest hunter in the county. Though the youngest magistrate on the bench, he was dreaded by evil-doers for his severity and respected for his firmness.

Katie saw him only as she chose to see him, though had she been wise she would have observed many little indications that would have warned her from the dangerous path she had taken. But with curious and persistent blindness she saw nothing, and went on in her loving, domineering wilful way, all unconscious that every act of opposition or disobedience was remembered and allowed to accu-

mulate in her husband's mind against a day of reckoning that must inevitably come.

This morning he said, as he took his coffee: "Don't go, wee wifie; I would rather you didn't."

Katie made a little *moue* as she answered: "But I must get the lace; and I'm sure I must go to Mrs. Ireson, if it's only in pity for the poor thing because you dislike her."

Roger was silent: he did not know how to deal with this little wife of his; she was such a tiny mite that it seemed absurd to imagine she could seriously oppose her will to his. It was a long time before he realised that such was really the case, but he had been aware of the fact now for some months, and puzzled over what to do. He was always slow to make up his mind, but, once made, no power on earth could move him from his decision.

He got up now to leave the room, when Katie said: "Oh, Roro, I saw widow Johnston yesterday; she is in great trouble because you sent Tom away. But I found out that he really was kept by his uncle, so I said he could come back and I would make it all right with you."

"You said what?" asked Roger, in so sharp and stern a voice that Katie stared at him with amazement.

"Why, Big Bear, how savage you are—you frighten me."

She had so dubbed him on their honeymoon, because she said he reminded her of a big brown bear she had known in the public gardens when at school in Dinan. "He was something like you," she had said, regarding her big husband with loving criticism. "Much flattered," he laughed. "He was a very handsome bear," she had continued, "and so loving and lazy, and just such an old softie as you are; he was called Roger, too, though every one called him Roro;" and she nestled up to him, calling him from that day forth either Roro or Big Bear. At first he had asked her not to do so; she only laughed and continued, and he had come to be indifferent about it, if not actually to like it. This morning, however, it annoyed him, and he said shortly:

"Don't call me 'Bear'; I don't like it. What did you say about Tom?"

"Only that when I found he really had been kept by his uncle, I would make it all right with you, and he could come back."

"Then you may tell his mother that you have made a mistake; he will not come back."

"But, Roro, you don't seem to understand; it was not the boy's fault he was kept."

"That is nothing to me. He knew my rules; if he chose to break them he must take the consequences; and you had better tell him so."

"What a hard-hearted old bear it pretends to be; but he won't be coming, because his mother said she daren't send him up until she'd

heard from you, for 'the Squire's a hard man,' she told me; wasn't it funny, Roro?"

"Very," answered Roger, quietly. "But widow Johnston is wiser than you, little woman."

"But I may have Tom back?"

"Take care, Katie; you will make me angry one day," said her husband, looking at her earnestly.

"Shall I?" answered Katie, nestling up to him in the loving, kittenish way she had. "What would you do to me if you were angry?"

"Beat you, perhaps," said Roger, slowly.

Katie laughed a low happy laugh.

"You would have to be careful, then; a blow from that paw would soon make an end of wee Katie," and she took one of his large, shapely hands in hers and kissed each finger separately.

"Yes," said Roger, looking down with a feeling of perplexed powerlessness at the tiny confiding thing whose golden head didn't even reach to his heart; "I fear it would; I should have to use a bunch of feathers as they do for babies. But, wee wifie, I wish you would understand that when I say a thing I mean it; I will not brook any opposition from you. I am a man, and I will be master!"

"I never doubted your being a man," laughed the incorrigible Katie; "and as to being master, why what an old goosey it is," and she mounted upon an ottoman that she called the platform of love, as it enabled her to put her arms round Roger's neck. "Of course you shall have your way, you always do, but I can't quite give in to you in everything; I'm not a piece of wax that you can mould as you choose. Besides, you wouldn't really like me to be only an echo of yourself, or to ask with fear and trembling, 'Dear lord and master, may I do so and so?' No; I love you dearly, and you love me, and there's no need for such fierce mastery on either side. It's no good frowning; I'm not afraid of you, Big Bear."

And she joined her hands softly round his neck, and kissed him again and again.

She did not observe that he neither returned the caress nor said any more.

She went to town that afternoon, bought her lace, visited Mrs. Ireson, and gave Roger an amusing account of that lady, when at dinner.

"So you went after all," was his only remark.

"Of course, Big Bear; why not?" was her astonished rejoinder.

So the weeks passed by, and almost daily Katie offended her husband by doing or saying something or other in opposition to his wishes. He tried one or twice to make her understand, but found it difficult to explain himself, and didn't know how to parry the loving childish nonsense with which she would receive his remonstrances.

But he brooded over it, the clouds gathered thicker and thicker, and one day the storm burst forth.

Katie had again announced her intention of visiting Mrs. Ireson, and Roger had again expressed his wish that she should not do so; more than that, he had said decidedly, "I forbid your going."

She only laughed, kissed him and said, "I'm not afraid of you, Big Bear."

"Don't go," were his last words before he left the house.

Katie went, calmly unconscious of the storm she was bringing down upon her devoted head.

After dinner, as they were in her Paradise, Roger asked:

"Where did you go to-day, little woman?"

"To see Mrs. Ireson; I told you I was going there," was the reply.

"This is too much," cried her husband, starting to his feet, "and I will put a stop to it once and for all."

He walked over to the door.

"Are you going out, Roro?" asked Katie, vaguely uneasy at his manner.

"Yes; I am going into the town to buy something," he answered, looking at her with a curious expression in his eyes, and went out of the room.

In the hall he paused to put on his overcoat to hide his evening dress, and then walked quietly, at an even pace, the two miles into the town. It was market-day, and he knew the shops would be open still, although it was nine o'clock. Reaching Althorpe, he went into a fancy shop and asked to see some whips.

"Toy whips, do you mean, sir?" inquired the young woman, rather wondering what the Squire wanted with such an article, but concluding it was as a present to some child.

"Yes."

"Here are some nice ones," she said, bringing a lot forward; "this blue-handled one is pretty and has a whistle, too."

Roger took them up one after the other, a sudden remembrance crossing his mind that blue was Katie's favourite colour. Perhaps that decided him in his choice; at any rate, he paid the shilling for the blue-handled whip, and returned as calmly to the house as he had left it.

Katie was in her bed-room; she had affected a singular style of garment when there, learnt from some French friends, and which consisted of a long loose robe of pale blue cambric, with low neck and short sleeves. Very charming she looked now in this attire, her small bare feet in satin slippers, and her short golden hair curled all around her graceful head. Some time before she had burnt off one side of her hair, while curling it with irons for some private theatricals, and had been obliged to have the other side cut off; as Roger admired it short, she had not grieved about the loss of it. She was wondering

vaguely now why he had left her in that odd way, and had a dim idea that perhaps he really didn't like her going to Mrs. Ireson's, when he opened the door and came and stood before her.

"Oh, there you are, Big Bear; where have you been?"

"I went into the town to buy this," he answered slowly, showing her the gay, blue-handled whip.

"To buy that," said Katie, staring at the thing in bewilderment. "What for?"

"For you. Listen to me, Katie: I have had patience too long; now it is at an end; I will bear with you no more. You will not understand that I am and will be master; I will allow no opposition from you. You have chosen in the face of all I say to do as you like; if my wishes happen to clash against yours, then you please yourself, regardless of me. I have told you often I will not have it; I will have obedience from you; you only laugh, and go on the same. So there is nothing else for it; you have brought this entirely on yourself. I cannot bend your will—therefore I will break it; and I know no other way but this," and he touched the toy whip significantly.

Katie had been staring at him in utter bewilderment; it was all so unexpected, so sudden, that she felt stunned; but his last words, above all his movement, aroused her.

"You—you are not going to strike me, Roger?" she asked haltingly, her cheeks blanching and her eyes opening wide with terror.

"That is just what I am going to do," replied her husband calmly. "After all you are but a child, and had better be treated as such. I know your dread of physical pain—perhaps that may make you understand, as my words and wishes fail."

"You must be mad, or a brute!" she cried with a sudden flash of anger. "How dare you speak so to me! I will leave you; I will go back to mamma and daddy," and her voice faltered piteously.

"You will do nothing of the sort," answered Roger, in the same cold, slow tone of voice. "I am in my right; a husband legally is allowed to chastise his wife if necessary. I am not going to kill you, or even to hurt you very much, but I mean you to understand that I am master."

"A man who will strike a woman is a coward—an unmanly, dishonourable coward," cried Katie, wildly.

"Have you done?" asked Roger, a hard steely look coming into his eyes that somehow cowed her. "I am neither a coward, or dishonourable or unmanly, but I have made up my mind what to do, and I shall do it."

"But—but—Roro, I don't know why you are so angry," said Katie, passing her hand through her short curls with a bewildered movement.

"I am not angry—not in the least; I only mean to be master," repeated Roger doggedly.

"You are, dear; I have never gone against you, I have always done

what you wished," answered Katie, in perfect faith and belief in her own words.

Roger raised his eyebrows. It was hopeless to make her understand by words, that was clear. "And this visit to Mrs. Ireson to-day, did I not forbid your going?"

"Yes, I know you did, but I thought you wouldn't really mind. Oh, Roro, have pity; only listen to me, I will explain it all," and she raised her pleading face to his, placing her hands as high as she could on his breast.

"Very well, you will of course find an excuse. Go on, I am listening."

"I only went because I thought you didn't mind really, and she is not as bad as you think—and——Ah, it is no good," she moaned, stopping in the middle of her sentence as she looked at her husband's cold impassive face.

"No good whatever," he acquiesced. "You may spare yourself and me any talk on the subject; I made up my mind weeks ago what to do and I shall do it," and he made a step forward.

Katie shrank from him with a low cry of terror.

"Have pity—have mercy!" she panted. "Roger, don't—Roger, save me!" And sick with fright, she threw herself straight into his arms, clinging to him convulsively as though wild fiends were after her.

Unmoved even by that soft warm clasp, Roger disengaged himself from her embrace, crushing one of her arms with unconscious force in his strong grasp, and taking the whip in his right hand struck her sharply across the bare shoulders three times.

Her agonised cry rang in his ears for long after. Releasing her, he said hoarsely: "You have no one to thank but yourself; you forced me to it," and left the room.

It was characteristic of the man that, on going to his study, he took up the evening papers to read as usual, and, what is more, read them; although across the news of the races flitted Katie's imploring face, and drowning the shouts of applause at some great concert was his wee wifie's cry of pain and terror. Finally he put down the papers and thought it all out again. "It is my only chance," he said at last; "if this fails, I must make up my mind to be most unhappy." He looked at his watch; it was near one. Pouring out a glass of wine, he put out the gas and went to Katie's room. The light was still burning, and he saw her golden head on the pillow and heard her convulsive sobbing. He frowned; she had cried too long, she would be ill. Going up to her, he touched her gently on the shoulder; she started with a cry of fear.

"Don't be silly, Katie, or imagine that every time I come near you now I am going to strike you; you know that is absurd. Here, drink this."

"I don't want anything," sobbed Katie.

"You will drink this," replied Roger. "When I come in let me find you have done so," and he went to his dressing-room.

Katie, feeling as though the whole world was crumbling under her feet, shaking with pain and fright, drank down the port obediently. Roger made no remark when he came in, and for the first time in the two years of their married life no good-night kiss was exchanged.

Neither slept much, though Roger, man-like, had the advantage over Katie, who, heart-broken, trembling with fear and pain—for it must be acknowledged she was an arrant little coward—lay shivering and weeping all the night through. She could not get any distinct idea of who was right or who was wrong; she only knew that a great, a terrible sorrow had come unexpectedly upon her. Roger, her Roro, had struck her, had scolded her, had covered her with shame, did not seem to love her, and had gone to sleep without kissing or speaking to her.

He, in his wakeful intervals, had made up his mind what to do; he would go away the next day for a fortnight, after speaking to Katie seriously. Curiously enough, and rather to his annoyance, amid all the turmoil of feeling following that painful scene, the strongest desire he had was to take wee sobbing Katie into his arms and kiss away her tears. But he resisted the impulse. "No, if I do it at all, I had better do it thoroughly," he muttered to himself, drawing back the arm he had half stretched out towards her. Once in his sleep, near morning, he put his hand on Katie's shoulder, and she turned and looked at the strong white fingers, and half shuddered and half longed to kiss them, as she had done, she remembered, some weeks ago, when he had spoken in jest, as she thought then, of striking her. Why had she not believed him? Why had she so misunderstood him? Gently she moved his hand away, and broke again into hopeless weeping.

The next morning, while dressing, Roger, having arranged his plan of action, prepared his little speech, and went into Katie's room.

"Are you awake?" he asked, standing tall and stern by her bedside.

She opened her eyes, and he was shocked and troubled to see how ill she looked. "Yet I didn't hurt her very much," was the swift thought that crossed his mind. He forgot that it was not only the physical pain his blows had given her, though even that was far more severe to a frail nervous girl like Katie than he could ever understand; but the suddenness of the attack, the complete revulsion of her life, had prostrated her; she felt sure of nothing, of no one, was utterly unnerved, struck to the ground.

"Listen to me, Katie," he went on. "I do not want any more such scenes as we had last night. One is enough for a lifetime; but I saw no other way of making you understand what I meant. I shall never strike you again, for if this once does not do what I hope it will, no number of blows would succeed; besides, it is beneath the dignity

of a man, and not at all to my taste. I shall leave by the ten train and be away a fortnight; I shall not write to you, and do not wish to hear from you. While I am away think over what I have said. If we are to have any happiness in our lives, you must understand that I will be master. Whether you think it right or wrong is nothing to me; your will must and shall be subservient to mine. So let me find an obedient little wifie when I return. Now, give me a kiss."

But Katie, worn out by her sorrowful night, and still half-dazed with shame and grief, turned from him with a shudder.

"Take care," said Roger coldly, though his heart gave a throb of pain as he saw the movement. "I will not ask you again for a kiss; you shall ask me, and if you do not do so soon, with a prayer for forgiveness, you risk a refusal and will spoil both our lives for ever," and he turned and left the room.

Katie, burying her burning head in the pillows, cried hysterically, "Oh, what has happened? What is the matter? What have I done? Oh, Roro, Roro, come back to me, I cannot live!"

Roger meanwhile was having his breakfast, and making a fairly good one. Half-way through he rang the bell, and when the servant came, said: "Take this coffee and something to eat to your mistress, and ask her if she is well enough to see me before I leave, otherwise I won't disturb her."

Janet took up the tray, and looked with much loving concern at her young mistress's tear-washed face.

"I've got a headache," explained Katie, to her old nurse, while she shivered so violently that her teeth chattered.

"Yes, and a heart-ache too, I fear, my lamb," muttered the old woman, who saw some difficulty had occurred between husband and wife, but discreetly asked nothing, merely saying: "The master wants to know if you are well enough to see him afore he goes."

Katie hesitated a moment; but her heart was sick and weary for Roger—her Roger, the one she knew, and she felt vaguely that she had misunderstood him, had treated him wrongly; he was her husband, her darling; she had sinned in ignorance, but still she had sinned! Yes, she must see him, she would humble herself to him, would submit to him. What mattered her will, or Mrs. Ireson, or the world, or anything, compared with Roger. Only if she had but known, if he had only said what he wanted, or if she had only understood that she really vexed him! How blind she had been!

"Tell your master I shall be glad to see him," she said, at last, and then lay back and shut her eyes. She felt that this was a crisis in her life; she must begin again. God grant it was not too late!

Janet tidied up the room, brushed her young mistress's hair, and bathed her face, and would have put on a pretty pale blue wrapper; but Katie pushed it aside. "Not blue, not blue; I shall never wear blue again! I hate it!" she cried excitedly; and the old nurse, wondering, put aside the blue and brought out a pink one.

"Now drink some coffee and try to eat," and she left and took the message to the Squire, who said simply, "Very well," while his heart gave a throb of joy.

Katie drank her coffee, but of course could eat nothing, and then lay shivering nervously, waiting to hear Roger's footstep. At last it came, and the poor child clutched convulsively at her pillow to save her from she knew not what.

"You said you wished to see me, Katie," said Roger, and glancing timidly up she saw him standing, tall, cold and stern, by her bedside.

There was a last effort to subdue the pride and will that still surged up in her. Had he not struck her? her cheeks still burnt with shame. Must she submit? even if she did, would he forgive her? he looked so stern and merciless that she became too frightened to speak. Roger stood there a minute or more while this struggle was going on in Katie's mind, then made a movement to the door with a heartsick sensation that all was over; his happiness in life was dashed to the ground. Katie's voice, faint, imploring, recalled him: "Roger, Roro, come back; I am sorry—forgive me and—kiss me."

He bent his head silently, not from surliness, but because his heart was too full for words.

Katie put her arms around his neck and imprinted a kiss on the corner of his mouth.

When Roger felt the old familiar touch of the warm fingers clasping his neck and the soft lips on his, he gave a smothered cry of love, and gathered his little wife to his heart, where she nestled like some wounded bird who has at last found rest.

II.

An hour later Roger left the house, and it was for the time the best thing he could do; for, the reaction over, Katie began again to feel hurt and angry, and burning with shame. Again and again she would turn back the loose sleeve of her dress and look at the cruel marks on her arm left by Roger's strong fingers. He would never strike her again; he had said so and it never entered her head to doubt him; but would any real, true, loving man strike a woman even once? how would their lives be in the future? Was she to do nothing she liked if he didn't happen to like it too? How even was she to know what he did wish if he wouldn't speak? After all, what had she done? was her sin of ignorant disobedience deserving of so merciless a punishment?

It was after all his fault. Why hadn't he told her that he didn't like her opposing him even in such trifles? How was she to know, for he had only laughed or said carelessly, "Take care, Katie, I shall get angry," which she took only as a joke? "When he comes

back, I will treat him coldly; he shall see I am not a child to be scolded and beaten!"

And so the first days passed on, wearily and sadly enough to the desolate little mistress of Bransome Towers, whose indignation died out quickly, though she did all she could to fan the fire into life again.

She loved Roger too thoroughly to allow any feeling against him to remain long in her heart. He had not told her where he was going, and had even forbidden her writing to him. Any other time she would not have heeded the prohibition, but would have written to his club, feeling confident that he would be glad to hear from her even though he had said not. Now she was afraid, and though every day she wrote letter after letter she only tore them up. Her parents were travelling on the Continent; even had they been within reach Katie had too keen a sense of duty and love to Roger to complain to them.

After five days she began to be really ill; all day she passed lying on a couch near the window, sick with longing for Roger. He was her darling, if he would only come back. What if some accident should happen to him? The nights were worse. She could not sleep, and would remain hour after hour moaning and weeping in a hopeless heart-broken manner. Janet got seriously alarmed, but Katie's vehement refusal to have a message sent to the Squire's club silenced her; she said he would be back in a fortnight and had wished to have no letters sent on. On hearing that, Janet would no more have dared to send a line, even though Katie were dying, than she would attempt to fly. It was curious how every one seemed to understand Roger better than Katie, who loved him so dearly, and whom he loved so well. Poor child, she went through a great agony in those days, that left its impress upon her for the rest of her life!

Meanwhile Roger had spent the first week of his voluntary exile with a man-friend, and had been as miserable as possible. What could Hinton, an old bachelor, understand of the longings that seized him for his wee wifie? Hinton didn't like women, was afraid of a lady, and only looked upon others as toys, dangerous toys. He was delighted to have Roger with him, delighted to perceive that some hitch had occurred between his friend and his wife, though he was too much a man of the world to ask any questions, and took Roger's moody silences and savage retorts as though they were natural. "A fine fellow, spoilt by a woman again, bother them all!" was his general and inward benediction on the female sex.

But Roger was nearly as miserable without Katie as Katie was without him. Not that he regretted in the very least what he had done; it was not the outcome of a moment of passion, he had thought over it long and seriously; but he was a true man, with a big loving heart and a straightforward honourable mind. He had done what he considered his duty, but it was none the less painful to him. Katie's look of bewildered terror and cry of pain haunted him,

until he began to ask himself why she was so astonished. He had thought the matter over for months, it was no new thing to him; but he forgot that he had never given her the smallest hint as to what was in his mind. He was a man who always found it difficult to explain himself, and rarely saw the necessity. He knew what he wanted and what he meant, but he neither could nor would explain to any one else. After a week with his friend he found life unbearable.

Hinton's cynical remarks about women disgusted him. He longed for Katie, for the touch of her soft fingers, even for the little imperious, dictatorial manner that had so often annoyed him, but which manner, here let it be said, he never saw again. He had broken her will, as he intended, but he found that the accomplishment of his greatest wish was not satisfactory on all points.

As he would not return home yet, having said he would be away for a fortnight, he suddenly made up his mind to visit a great-aunt of his who lived in a lovely spot among the Westmoreland hills. Mrs. Crombie had brought him up when he was a small boy, and his parents, then in India, had been obliged to send him to England—they had both died abroad—and he knew no other home than "Auntie's," of whom he was very fond. Telegraphing that he would be there as soon as possible, he packed his portmanteau, said good-bye to his friend, and found himself the next evening in his aunt's cosy little drawing-room.

Mrs. Crombie was a sweet old lady, one of that rare type of perfect old age that one comes across now and again. After a few days with her, Roger felt soothed and calmed. The old lady saw clearly that something was preoccupying him, but refrained from pressing for any confidence. She had asked lovingly for Katie, and had said nothing when her nephew replied shortly that she was well, nor did she remark on two unusual facts; the one that Roger had come suddenly without his wife, the other that, being here alone, no daily letter or indeed any letter at all passed between the, at other times, inseparable husband and wife. She had learnt the wisdom of silence, so simply did what she could to make him comfortable, and waited.

Roger, in the long hours during which he walked over the Westmoreland hills, thought long and deeply of Katie, and a faint idea that perhaps the fault did not lie entirely on her side began dimly to strike him. Her look of unmistakable bewilderment and terror at his outburst told him clearly that she had been completely taken by surprise. Yet why had she not understood? It was plain enough to him, why was it not plain to her? Yet how sweet and loving and dainty she was, his wee wifie; how he longed to have her small hands clasped again around his neck, and feel her lips kissing him. How out of joint the world seemed, and how he wished that interminable fortnight would pass away!

Time passed on, as time ever does in its indifferent, inexorable manner, and brought Roger to the evening before his departure for

home. Dinner was over, and a persistent rain precluded any idea of going out. He sat with his aunt, silent and preoccupied. The old lady glanced at him once or twice, but said nothing.

At last Roger took a sudden resolution, and, going over to her, threw himself on the rug by her side and said, "Auntie, I wonder if you can help me."

"Tell me what it is, laddie; perhaps I may be able," and the old lady put down her knitting and looked with calm loving eyes into Roger's sombre troubled ones.

The young man paused; he did not know how to begin; it was always difficult for him to explain himself, and now he was utterly at a loss.

"Is it about Katie?" asked his aunt, seeing his hesitation.

"Yes."

"You have quarrelled?"

"Quarrelled—no," answered Roger, raising his head proudly; "I do not quarrel with my wife, but I will be master; she wouldn't understand that I meant it, and so—I struck her," and he looked half defiantly, half pleadingly at Mrs. Crombie. The old lady started a moment, and a transient flush of shame and anger crossed her brow; but she was old and had learnt much, so she said only, "Tell me all about it, laddie."

He was so relieved at not hearing the expected outcry of brute, coward, etc., that words came more easily to him, and with the help of skilfully-put questions, Mrs. Crombie soon saw pretty clearly how matters stood between the young couple.

"You have tried a dangerous experiment," she said softly, when Roger had ended his story. "Please God all will yet be well, for she loves you and you love her. But, laddie, will you let an old woman, who so soon now must cross the borderland to another world, give you a little advice? We who stand, as it were, between this world and the world to come, see things more clearly than you can who are in the thick of the fight. My life here is nearly over; for good or evil it is past; but if I can help you and wee Katie, I would so gladly do it. Will you let me speak?"

"Yes, auntie, do help me. I feel lost somehow, and don't seem to understand women now," and Roger sighed.

"Little wonder since we do not understand ourselves," replied the old lady, with a sad smile. "My laddie, it seems to me that you and Katie began your married lives as many young couples do, without the smallest knowledge of each other's characters. You both built up an ideal, and would see no other, until forced to do so. Your eyes were opened first, for, with all your lazy, calm manner, you are a man of deep feeling and strong will; but how could the child know that, since you never showed this side of your character to her? From babyhood she had been brought up to have her own way. I remember its being told of her as a child of three, sobbing out passionately, 'I want mine own way and daddy's way too,' and she

always got it. So she took it as a matter of course that you too would give in to her whims and fancies, thinking doubtless, poor little loving fool, that she wound you around her little finger, and that you had no will but hers."

"That's just it," said Roger; "she would not understand that I am master."

"Did you ever tell her so seriously?"

"It didn't enter my head at first; it was so amusing to see a mite like that have any will at all that——"

"That in fact you encouraged her," said Mrs. Crombie. "It appeared to you doubtless something like a wren setting up its will against an eagle. But when you began to get annoyed at this unconscious—for it was unconscious—opposition to your wishes, why didn't you speak to her?"

"I did often, but she would only laugh and say, 'I'm not afraid of you, Big Bear,'" and Roger felt a lump rise in his throat, as the words brought blind, wilful little Katie before him.

"She will never say that again," remarked the old lady quietly. "But, laddie, the fault is not all hers. Judging from the little you tell me, I see that you kept all these thoughts to yourself, and went on your daily life as usual, storing up all your vexations in your mind against her, until, as must happen, the day came when the storm burst and caused that terrible scene. Poor wee Katie, how terrified she must have been!" murmured Mrs. Crombie more to herself than to her nephew.

"But why wouldn't she see I meant what I said?" cried Roger, while a pang of remorse ran through him.

"Because you never told her in a way she could see and understand what your wishes were. Think a moment; am I not right?" and the old lady fixed her piercing eyes on Roger.

"Perhaps not," he allowed; "but she ought to have known."

"How should she know? Put yourself in her place. All her life the child has had her own way. She marries and fancies that she will find you as governable as every one else, and you, according to your own showing, were amused at it, and didn't check her in the least. When your eyes were opened, it was too late; she simply could not believe but that everything she did was perfect in your sight; you tried now and then to warn her, but did not do it in the right way, and so your warnings had no effect. Then you shut yourself up in silence, store up in your mind every little sin of wilfulness or disobedience, until the list is a formidable one. It was as though you allowed a child to play near a gunpowder-magazine with a lighted match, the explosion must come; and one day you suddenly appear to her as a merciless judge, terrify her with hard words, and, utterly pitiless, even strike her."

"I didn't hurt her very much; it was only a toy whip I went out and bought for the purpose," said Roger, a dull red rising

in his cheeks; adding sullenly: "I would do it all over again if needs be."

Mrs. Crombie was silent for a while; she was trying to keep calm. Her heart burnt with indignation; a woman better understands a woman, and all her sympathies were with poor frightened bewildered Katie. Her nephew's remark, that it was only *a toy whip he had gone out and bought for the purpose*, gave her a glimpse of the unbending determination of his character that fairly startled her. Any other man, if he did it at all, would certainly only have done so in a burst of sudden anger; but this calm, cold carrying out of his resolution had something terrible in it: as well try to move a rock of granite as to bend the iron will of the man before her. The very intensity of his love for Katie had made him the more severe; he had done it, and, as he said, would do it again if needs be, which did not prevent him from suffering horribly himself; she saw that plainly, while his great ignorance of women pleaded to her somewhat in his excuse. So she sat still, struggling to be just—that most difficult thing to a woman; so few are thoroughly just; they let their hearts and impulses speak instead of their reason, which mistake has shipwrecked the happiness of many.

Looking into Roger's gloomy face, the old lady, with subtle instinct, changed her tactics. She saw he expected that she would take Katie's side against him, and was prepared to hear what she said in unmoved silence, and with a predetermination not to be affected in the least.

"Laddie," she said at last, placing her hand on Roger's head, "perhaps you are right in what you did. I am only a woman, my boy, and so was a little shocked at hearing you say you had struck Katie. You see, wife-beaters are not generally looked upon as a very noble race of men, and——"

"I shall never touch her again; I told her so," interrupted Roger; "and I shall keep my word."

"Of course," assented his aunt; "no one knowing you would doubt your word for a moment; only, sharing in the general opinion as I do, I confess I was rather startled at first. But you are an exceptional man, my dear Roger, and therefore I say again perhaps you were right, perilous as the experiment is; and, mind you, I do not exonerate your wife from blame; she should have had more sense, for she is by no means only a silly, pretty doll."

"No, indeed," cried Roger. "I am very proud of Katie's common-sense; she is often clearer-headed and wiser than two men put together."

"Quite so; all the more blame to her for so grossly misunderstanding your character. She should have been more dutiful, more obedient, should have studied your wishes more——"

"She always studied my wishes—always," cried the young man wrathfully, rising from his position and pacing up and down the room. "It was only she did not understand that I would be master; that

when I said a thing I meant it; otherwise she is the sweetest little wife any one ever had."

A smile crossed the old lady's lips, but she only said gently: "Come back here, laddie. Put your head on my knees—so. You say you didn't hurt her much. How do you know? She is a terrible little coward, is wee Katie, and dreads pain."

Roger moved uneasily.

"Most women do," went on Mrs. Crombie. "But it was not only the bodily pain—for I don't suppose for a moment that you did hurt her much; you are not a brute, and as you say it was but a toy whip," and again a slight smile passed over her mouth as she thought of the strong man's care that the instrument of punishment should be suited to the weakness of the culprit. "Think a moment, and please understand I am not pleading for Katie in the least; I am only trying to show you the state of the case from her side of view. Think of the suddenness of the thing to her. She had gone on in her foolish, imperious little way, thinking she was governing her big husband, utterly unconscious that he on his side was storing up every single opposition to his will, to pour out the whole of it one day upon her in cold and bitter justice. She was wrong, very wrong, but, Roger, I ask you as a man—a stern one, but I think a just one—are you perfectly without blame?"

There was silence again for some five minutes; then the young man raised his eyes, and they were wet with tears, to his aunt's face, and said: "I see, auntie; I was blind too, and I have sinned too. Tell me, do you think it is too late? Will Katie hate me now?"

"If I know anything of woman's love—above all if I know anything of Katie—she will receive you back with love and tenderness. But, Roger, remember one thing, she can never be quite the same again: do not expect it or demand it: *a woman never forgets.* Do what you will, do what she will, she will always fear you now, always be a little bewildered, a little uncertain, never sure of you again. But bear with it, for she loves you truly and you love her, and I trust God will give you many happy years together. Bear and forbear, laddie, is the motto married people should lay to heart. Don't expect too much from your little wife; she is but a weak loving girl, but she is true to you, true as death. She disappoints you sometimes, but think, do you never disappoint her? Men are so ignorant of women, they perhaps think we are not worth studying. At any rate, they never understand that every true, loving woman builds up an ideal of the man she loves, and clings to that ideal desperately even after the god of brass has plainly shown the feet of clay. There, laddie, I will lecture no more. Good-bye. I shall not see you to-morrow before you leave. Give my dear love to wee Katie, and may God protect you both."

Roger kissed the old lady reverently, and the next morning started for home.

There was no carriage to meet him when he got out at Althorpe station, two miles from the Towers, and though he did not expect it, he felt somehow chilled. Leaving his portmanteau to be sent up, he walked on full of thought as to how Katie would receive him. By the time he reached the gates he was really nervous for the first time in his life. He walked into the house, and gave a slight shiver as the thought crossed his mind that perhaps it would always be so in the future: no Katie would come flying out to meet him, and he knew that if that should be the case his life would indeed be desolate. "How foolish I am," he muttered; "she could not know when I was coming back; she must be in Paradise; I will go there."

So he mounted the low broad staircase, on to a little room he had furnished for her with every luxurious trifle love could fancy, and which they had named Paradise. The door was open. Katie was lying on a low lounge, staring into vacancy; she had been hoping against hope that he would come, but she knew the train had been in some time. Roger's heart gave a great throb. She looked so slight, so frail, so fearfully ill, that a feeling of terror came over him. "Was she going to die?" Suddenly she turned her head on the pillow with a piteous heart-breaking cry: "Roro, Roro, come back to me, I cannot live."

"Katie, my wee wifie," said Roger softly.

With a stifled cry of exceeding joy she sprang to her feet, held her arms out to him with a touching look of appeal and love. He clasped her half fainting in his arms as he whispered, "Look up, wee wifie, your Big Bear has come back to you. Let us forget the past, and, with God's help, begin afresh."

So they once more began their journey of life together over the waves of this troublesome world, with a better chance of being happy than most can boast of.

Roger had tried a desperate remedy, and for a time the result had hung in the balance; but love had won, as true, steadfast, faithful love always will win, even in this sad, misunderstanding, sorrow-worn world of ours. But the experiment is not one to be tried lightly, for not one man in nine hundred could have acted as Roger did, without being either a tyrant or a brute; and not one woman in a thousand as Katie did, without feeling insulted beyond bearing, and having every atom of love in her for the man who struck her killed for ever on the spot.

AN OLD FRENCH MEDICINE-WOMAN.

By Mary Negreponte.

MÈRE GALIPAUX lived at Montmartre, in a narrow little alley whose cobble pavement harboured chinks in which the grass grew, and in which were rat-holes tenanted by numbers of the wiry and fierce little creatures.

She had a finer view from her top-storey garret than the great M. Carnot himself from his Elysée, for she could distinguish the round, ruddy-gold dome of the Invalides, and the smaller, duskier one of the Panthéon, the irregular Corinthian and Doric towers of St. Sulpice, the delicate spire of the Sainte Chapelle, and innumerable other steeples ; all emerging from the chaos of brown structures which constitute modern Paris ; and athwart which lay the broad, grey Seine, like a sinuous *moiré* sash-ribbon thrown carelessly between the bricks and mortar.

Not that Mère Galipaux took much interest in the wide and beautiful vista dominated by the Butte Montmartre, whereon she had her domicile.

In fact, she very rarely walked beyond the ancient and well-defined limits of the Mons Martis.

On fête days, such as the Toussaint, Pentecost, Shrove Tuesday, etc., she would attire herself in her coal-scuttle bonnet and Indian shawl—modes of 1840 to which she adhered—and perhaps, leaning on the arm of a grandson, stroll as far as Clichy, or even the neighbourhood of the Madeleine ; but these occasions were rare. She contented herself, as a rule, with regular attendance at St. Pierre on the Sabbath, and, later on in the day, would watch from her window the procession of worshippers who climb the Calvary to lay their votive offerings on the shrine of the Mater Dolorosa.

During week-days the Mère Galipaux was far too busily occupied to be able to concern herself with the doings and religious observances of her neighbours. She was what is popularly known as a medicine-woman—that is, she understood the elementary homœopathic treatment of great or little ailments, to which she added a certain curious manual dexterity and diagnostic clairvoyance which many a certificated physician might have envied. She had been bred in Auvergne, and there was not a herb that grew on the mountains of that province with which she was unfamiliar, and whose properties she had not learnt early to know and employ for medicinal and curative purposes. Her father, a prosperous peasant proprietor, owned a fair acreage of land and numerous live-stock ; and it was well known in the village that Père Driant had no need to call in the veterinary when la Roussotte

(his cow) had the "staggers," and his Norman cart-horse had gone lame, or his spaniel and retriever were seized with any canine complaint, so successfully were they treated and so rapidly cured by his daughter. In the same way she set the villagers' broken limbs, and bandaged their deep scythe and sickle cuts, until her reputation spread far and wide, and people came from miles round the country-side to consult her upon their ailments.

When she married the local chemist's apprentice, and went to live in Paris, no one was surprised; but the older villagers said, with that mixture of shrewdness and simplicity which characterises the Auvergnat, "Elle fera fortune, la Galipaux à Paris, bien schur." And so it fell out; for Aline's husband barely raised sufficient to keep the wolf from the door; and his wife added to their scanty income by practising her "profession" among the colony of Auvergnats settled in Paris; and long ere the young couple's sons grew to manhood, and Galipaux had become head-assistant at a first-class chemist's, she had amassed a goodly sum, which, invested in consolides, brought her in nearly forty pounds a year; and she was known among the poorer classes throughout the length and breadth of the city as "La doctoresse de la Butte Montmartre."

There was no false pride about la Mère Galipaux. Pup or canary, child or cart-horse, she prescribed for with the same remedies and the same tranquil nonchalance, which was not indifference and not affectation, although it appeared to partake of both, but was simply an involuntary homage to her own remarkable powers and resourceful judgment. At seventy-five she was a tall, big-boned woman, with keen, practical, grey eyes, above which stretched an immense breadth of forehead. She had a great, arched nose, firmly-closed lips, and long, sinewy hands, supple as indiarubber, which latter could be bent back from the wrist almost level with the arm. She had a forbidding manner, assumed to hide a more than womanly tenderness of heart, for none of her own condition, or of the lowest order in Paris, ever appealed to her in vain.

She had made one or two rules for her own observance.—Firstly, never to take money for attendance on cabmen in the slack summer months, or for treatment of cab-horses throughout the year; secondly, never to treat members of the higher and moneyed classes; thirdly, to avoid meetings with the medical profession upon all occasions; fourthly, to act fairly and charitably towards such of the sick poor who came in her way. And these rules she kept.

But woe betide the people with *bobos* (slight ailments) who hied to her consulting-attic; these were received with scant courtesy, and sent speedily to the right-about.

Mère Galipaux deprecated the indiscriminate use of drugs, and thereby unconsciously paraphrasing the dictum of one of the great physicians of the beginning of the century, she would remark in her laconic, incisive way, "Laissez agir la nature, v'là notre devoir; elle

schait plus long que nous, et parbleu, quand elle a dit son dernier mot ce ne sont pas nos drogues et nos tisanes qui guériront le malade."

So much for theory; but in case of emergencies, Mère Galipaux's walls were lined with a regiment of bottles of all shapes and sizes, containing cordials, simples and extracts of her own wonderful herbal infusions and decoctions. For distilling purposes she possessed a conical apparatus which resembled the alembics used in the middle ages by alchemists and other votaries of the black art. Above this triple row of flasks hung bundles of dried aromatic plants which once were fragrant and feathery on the lower slopes of the Puy-de-Dôme, and which even still, though dead, contrived to impregnate the atmosphere with a piquant and not unpleasant odour. Surgical books and pamphlets lay upon the stained deal table, showing that the *doctoresse*, as much as her daily occupations permitted, took an interest in the progress of that science 'neath whose banner she marched, though she had no pretensions to be anything but a medical free-lance. And the worthy dame: when not engaged in binding Mère Perrin's *matou's* left ear, which had been almost torn off by rival Toms on his last nocturnal promenade, or in setting the broken leg of Petit Poucet, the baker's errand boy's poodle, or in squirting soothing mixture into the inflamed orb of some Paris street *gamin*, or in distilling and experimenting: would always be seen with a book on her knee.

Her husband had left her in flourishing circumstances, and since his death she continued to live on in the same old rooms she had occupied on coming to live in Paris forty years previously, and nothing would induce her to replace the old furniture by newer and less threadbare chairs, tables and cupboards. The carved oaken clock she had brought with her from Auvergne, ticked pompously from its corner, just as it had done when it was placed in her great-grandfather's kitchen one hundred and seventy years ago.

Mère Galipaux was a member of the Paris branch of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and had even drawn up a petition requesting the president to interfere on behalf of the Montmartre rats, which were pitilessly hunted and destroyed by the inhabitants of the quarter; but of course the appeal was set down as quixotic, and the army of rodents continued to die lingering deaths in gins, as if no measures had been taken by their protectress for their deliverance.

The steep little alley where Mère Galipaux lived was the happy hunting-ground for the whiskered fraternity of Montmartre. They grew and multiplied in the big sewer underneath the street level; they danced mazurkas on the uneven cobbles, and darted between the *sabots* of the working folk when they returned from shop and factory at twilight; they climbed through the partitions of the old houses which had been built in the reign of Henri IV., and made the usual havoc in loaves and cheeses; their weird, shrill cries awoke the soundest sleepers at night-time, and even Bishop Hatto in his castle

was not more surrounded by them than were the inhabitants of the Rue de la ferronnerie, Montmartre. And Mère Galipaux alone, of all her fellows, tolerated and cared for the strange, destructive little creatures. She waged a silent war on her neighbours anent the rats, for, through close vigilance, she knew the whereabouts of every gutter-trap and poison-dish, and after dark would light her lantern, and, armed with a few bandages and surgical appliances, hie on her unsuspected errand in the streets. Uninjured rodents she set at liberty; those who were already in the convulsive throes she humanely despatched. She rinsed away the death-conveying messes in the cracked dishes and flower-pots, and for these substituted harmless ingredients of a similar appearance. She then placed food remnants in the holes between the paving-stones, and rats that were slightly hurt she carried to her attic and saw to their wounds till they were cured.

Not a living soul in the neighbourhood knew of this remarkable crusade. Life had taught Mère Galipaux a lesson which some folks find so hard to learn, and that was to keep her own counsel; she had forbidden the members of her family to visit her of an evening; and as, owing to her immense gifts and masculine strength of character, her authority was almost patriarchal, none dared to disobey her in the matter.

The old medicine-woman was no respecter of persons, or rather, of the privileged among the animal species. She did not see why there should be one rule for the spirited race-horse, and another for the costermonger's donkey; nor why white mice should be tended and coddled by children in wicker cages, and their cousins the field-mice cruelly exterminated. For her there were no grades in the divine order of Life, whose dim beginnings in the creeping things and batrachia seem so repulsive to frivolous natures. She belonged to the race of healers in her humble way, as surely as Hippocrates, Claude Bernard, and Jenner did in theirs; and even as these great men would have imperilled their lives on all occasions in the cause of humanity, so la Mère Galipaux would have sojourned in plague-stricken places and fever haunts if, thereby, she could have lessened, by one iota, the distressing total of diseases and ills that menace her fellow-creatures throughout the natural term of their lives.

Perhaps on that account, when she died, the crowd of mourners who followed her to her tomb was so great that the traffic in the Boulevard Clichy was temporarily suspended, and the great deserted Montmartre Cemetery was populous for the space of half an hour. Had la Mère Galipaux been the Dean of the Academy of Medicine, she could not have received a warmer tribute to her memory than this spontaneous popular testimony, more eloquent in its undemonstrative fervour than the most polished funeral sermon preached by a fashionable deacon, or a volley of guns fired over her grave.

GRANDMOTHER'S WAYS.

Aye, Lizette, here we come, my girl,
To meet you when your work is done:
—The good God keeps us poor folks' time
With rising and with setting sun—
Your young one pointed to the sky,
And first she crowed and then she cried,
And I must leave my wheel and walk,
Or she would not be satisfied!

Nay, keep your basket—for that's light—
And I will bear the child along:
Do you think I am too old and frail
While you are young and stout and strong?
Be 't so. But you've hard work to do:
Aye, work of heart as well as hand:
You'll need your strength. We pity you,
We old folks, for we understand!

Think you 'tis but your babe I bear
My little grandchild, whom you say
I surely love beyond mine own,
And spoil in quite a different way?
Ah, Lizette, all my little ones
Seem in your baby: most of all
Your little sister, long asleep
Where the deep churchyard shadows fall.

These ready tears are not for her,
(She's with her Lord, where I shall be)
But for the hungry mother-heart
Her little coffin left with me!
It is my stored-up love for her
I pour upon this babe of thine,
Even as 'tis our risen Lord
We worship, while we deck His shrine.

I've seen a sailor, ere he starts
For some strange, unfrequented land,
Heap largesse on the crowd, or grasp
Some stranger's half-reluctant hand;
So, as we old folks wait at rest
Beside Life's tranquil sunset shore,
The latest loves of life receive
The dues of all that went before.

Isabella Fyvie Mayo.

GRANDMOTHER'S WAYS.

A BLIGHTED LIFE.

By the Author of "The Harvest of a Quiet Eye," etc.

AH, had she but kept in her boudoir, and not stolen into his "study," during his absence, to look for some writing-paper! Or had she but found it lying about, as was usual with him; or, at least retired, baffled, and not thought to look in his writing-case for it!

"It was full of old odds and ends, and a letter along with the rest;
She had better have put her naked hand into a hornets' nest!"

She could not help seeing the name of his correspondent—"Dear Mrs. Jacob"—nor, having seen this, could she refrain from reading the few following words. For this girl—for a girl of twenty-four she was, although a widow—was just the one little bitter in the nectar-goblet of her rejoiceful married life. She fancied there had been old love-passages between Euetheira Jacob and her own husband; at least, they had been a good deal together. Then, she gathered, there had been some misunderstanding on both sides, and *she* had married Nathan Jacob, the old Jew millionaire, and *he* had married—herself, Agate Smith, at only eighteen, just out of the school-room. Ah, she saw it all now. They had married in a huff on both sides. He had never loved her, and now he was counting on her death! Yes, no doubt it was so. She had always been delicate, and the doctor *had* been anxious, lately, as to her state of health, and had ordered her to spend the winter abroad. And now, after four years of married life, the pretty widow was free and immensely rich, and *they*, well, not *poor*, but obliged to live very carefully, even though they had no children. Yes, there again, no "incumbrances" on either side! And he was impatient, no doubt, to be also free, and then—oh, this letter was *too* bad—such haste would be indecent; she could not have believed it of *him*, her husband, so refined, such a poet, and yet here it was, in black-and-white.

So saying, she turned her eyes, weary with crying, once more upon the half-sheet of paper which she had taken in her dismay into her boudoir, to wonder and to weep over. This was the note:

"My dear Mrs. Jacob,—I had not time before to answer your letter, which reminded me so vividly of 'old times.' Just a line now to say that I am every day expecting my wife to be taken. I shall then remind you of your *promise*, and, as soon as possible after the event, you shall hear from me.

"Ever yours,

"Gerard Mildmay."

There could be no mistake about the matter. Life must now be a burden. All the happiness of it was blighted. What to do? She almost wished, with Hamlet,

> "That th' Almighty had not fixed
> His canon 'gainst self-slaughter!"

Just to take some slumberous potion and go to sleep, to wake where no illnesses are, or disappointments. To leave a letter for him; just a few words. "Gerard, dear, I know all. Your poor little wife will not be in your way any longer. You can marry Euetheira when you will, now. Only not *quite* directly. People will say unkind things if you do. Your poor little once—wife."

That is what one would like to have written. Nay, she *would* write it: and leave it ready. For she was *sure* the doctor *was* afraid about her. And now, of course, she would not have the heart or the spirit to get well. Why should she put Gerard to the expense of wintering abroad? No, she would refuse to go now. Let it be over, and the sooner the better.

So she wrote it out, on a dainty sheet of dull-lined note, and blurred the writing, as she wrote, with tears: and dried, and sealed it with (in black) a small feminine seal: and placed it in a side-drawer of her davenport. "He will be sure to look over my papers," she wept, "when I am dead."

* * * * *

"My dear doctor, I cannot imagine what can be the matter with her. Yes, I know she is constitutionally delicate, and that we must not expect her to be very lively, as things are; and that she may have fits of depression. It is not *that*, but there is some extraordinary change. Besides, though not very strong, she was as happy as the days are long, a few days ago. And now all seems altered."

"How is the appetite? Does she sleep well?"

"She cares to take nothing, and seems wasting away. In her sleep she sobs, and often murmurs words, which I cannot catch, in a most heart-breaking tone. She sleeps more soundly in the morning, but there are always traces of tears in her eyes."

"Had any loss lately? Been thwarted or disappointed?"

"In no way that I can imagine. Oh, doctor, had we not better have some further advice? Not that I am other than satisfied; but you know they say two heads are sometimes better than one."

"Oh, I have not the least objection. But the expense would, of course, be considerable of having a man from London. And I really hardly know in what direction the expert would be wanted. The diagnosis is very simple; and, until about a week ago, the case seemed simplicity itself. Change; a mild air; recreation; tonics; pleasant society. Could you not leave for the Continent a little earlier?"

"I would do anything, everything. But now she will not hear of going at all. Nothing short of force will, she says, induce her.

When I press for a reason, she says I shall know, some day, and bursts into tears."

"No insanity in the family, on either side?"

"Doctor! *No.* She is sensible enough, except in being so unreasonable."

"Ha! Yes, I see. It is plain to me, however, that there is something on her mind, some truth, or fear, or misunderstanding."

"I do not see how it is possible."

"No, I dare say not; still, my advice is, take her about, amuse her mind, pet her a bit, and wait a week, and see."

"But I can't pet her more than I do. If I show her, as usual, affection, she draws sadly away, with a look as if her heart was breaking. And she begs me to let her be quiet at home, if ever I suggest any outing or entertainment; we are both, for no intelligible reason, made perfectly wretched."

"Hum! No prior attachment, I suppose?"

"Why, Doctor, she was only eighteen when we married. And she appeared to be devoted to me. And is so still, I cannot doubt; only there would seem to be some great sorrow which has come between us. But I have not the least idea how such a thing could be!"

* * * * *

Yes, she was missing. There was no doubt of it. The bed had not been slept in. (Her husband had been called away on urgent business for one night; and she had pretended, Portia-like, to have left home to follow him.) But she had been traced, on his return (a simple schemer she, and one needing no Sherlock Holmes upon her track), to a railway station some five miles away. The Severn flowed near that station, and the Severn was, in parts, deep in its windings, thereabouts. Above one of the deepest pools, where there was a current and an eddy, a fragment of her dress had been found, conspicuously marked. But it was all too thin, too shallow. Quite an ordinary detective was set upon her track. And her husband hurried home, with a small key which had been found beside the pocket of the waistcoat (or whatever it might be which they had discovered), on which was a folded label.

"The third right-hand drawer of my davenport will give the explanation. Good-bye, *dear* husband. You will know, now, *how* I loved you.

"YOUR ONCE LITTLE WIFE."

And when he did reach home, and hurried, breathless, to the drawer, it is needless to say she had given the wrong key! Just as, half-maddened, he was about to wrench it open with the poker—anything—he saw the key (as might have been expected) left in another drawer, half-way down. Doubtless, blinded by tears, she had confused the two!

But he impetuously drew out the interpreting drawer, and saw—first

to see of all the papers there—a long slim envelope, sealed with black, and addressed to "*Dear* Gerard—my once—husband—so loved—so loved—"

Out of patience with her for once, he let slip the exclamation: "Why, what does the woman mean?"

And then he tore open the envelope, and read (as we have done before):—

"Gerard dear, I know all. Your poor little wife will not be in your way any longer. You can marry Euetheira when you will, now. Only—not *quite*—directly. People will say unkind things, if you do.

"YOUR POOR LITTLE WIFE."

"Well, I give it up. Mad! Yes, the doctor said so. Stark, staring mad. *Who* on earth—why, it *must* be Mrs. Jacob. No one else has that fantastic Greek name. Oh yes, furious insanity. There is no other explanation. I wonder, when we find her, which asylum is the best?

"But, nonsense, there must be some key to the riddle. I wonder if the post is in yet, and whether Sergeant Buckle has discovered her whereabouts."

"Come in! What, a telegram? Oh, at Chepstow! Let me see, is there a train to fit? O Adam and Eve, happy in a Paradis without Bradshaw. Yes! Ha! There is! I can—I say, put up some things in a portmanteau, and hail a cab! Off to Muddleborough Junction! So I shall see her to-night, before eleven, and, I hope, get out of this utterly hopeless muddle."

* * * * *

"And now, madam, that we are once more together, as, I presume, husband and wife, may I inquire into the meaning of this more than astonishing mock tragedy? And especially into the meaning of this bewildering document—which, duly instructed by you, I have discovered in the drawer of your davenport?"

"Oh, don't look so hard, and speak so sternly. I can't bear it, Gerald. You used—I thought, at least, you used—to love me. And I was so happy. And then I came upon *that* letter, to *her*. And—I—couldn't—bear—to feel—that—you—were—all—the—while——*longing*—for—me—to—*die*——that—you—might——marry *her!*"

Here the voice went into a wild wail. But the husband, utterly mystified, remained silent, awaiting some possible clue.

"And so—I thought—I can't live long, especially *now;* and why shouldn't I go away a little earlier and be"—with a great gulp—"out of the way? And then, after a little while of seeming to be sorry—oh, yes, you *would* have been a *little* sorry; you are so kind and tender—then, you know, you could have married *her*, and been happy, and I should, I daresay, have made up my mind to it, in the other——"

But here she quite broke down. He *did* feel some irritation in his entire bewilderment. He spoke with some slight tinge of bitterness under his love:

"I sit and gather wisdom. I suppose this *is* an hotel at Chepstow, and *not* the ward of a lunatic asylum! *May* I, if not too troublesome, ask to *which* letter, and to which proposed future wife for me, you may be pleased to allude? I am so utterly ignorant in the matter that you must excuse my troubling you. *Might* I be permitted a sight of the mysterious letter?"

"Oh, Gerard! how *can* you? You *must* know! Have you no conscience? THERE—there it is! And *now?*"

He read it over, amazedly at first, musingly presently, bitter-amusedly at last.

"MY DEAR MRS. JACOB,—I had not time before to answer your letter, which reminded me so vividly of 'old times.' Just a line now to say that I am every day expecting my wife to be taken. I shall then remind you of your *promise*, and as soon as possible after the event you shall hear from me.

"Ever yours,

"GERARD MILDMAY."

"Yes," he said, meditatively—"those were very pleasant days, when she and I used to study photography together. Her letter, I recall, reminded me of them, only she carried it on, and I left it off. She enlarges and finishes photographs *beautifully*. I remember she *did* promise to enlarge one of yours, knowing how it would delight me, if ever you were persuaded to be taken, which, as I maintain, out of vanity, you were averse to having done. Do you see, dear? It is too late to go home to-night. We must make ourselves as happy as we may here. And, do you mind trusting me a *little* more, in the time to come?"

* * * * *

And they lived happy ever after.

THE STREGA'S CURSE.

By Lady Margaret Majendie.

CHAPTER I.

"LIVIO! you will repent this; not once or twice, but daily, hourly, to the last day of your life."

"I assure you that you have said enough."

"No; I will not be silenced! I will speak; and I mean to save you from yourself if I can."

"You are a fool, Gian!"

"It is you that are the fool; and such a fool, my boy, that if you persist in this madness you lose me for a friend. I shall be ashamed to be accounted as such."

"As you please."

"You shall hear me to the end."

The speakers were standing in the whitewashed parlour of the little inn at Maiano, a quarrymen's village nestled into the heart of the mountains.

It was by a strange accident that these two young men found themselves in such a place. The elder of the two, Giovanni Montana, had sprained his ankle severely while enjoying a walking tour in the mountains; the younger, Livio Marchesa Baldara, found himself called upon to fulfil the duties of a very affectionate though unskilled nurse.

The ankle was almost well now, but the result of the delay and sojourn in this little country inn had been more serious than the injury.

Count Giovanni stood by the window with a cigar between his lips, Livio had one foot on a settle while he fastened his boots—both wore the uniform of the Italian army, for they were on leave.

"Make haste and get it over," said the younger man, affecting a careless indifference that he was far from feeling.

"You are an only son, Livio?"

"Quite true."

"You are the head of the family?"

"Folly!"

"It is worth consideration; the family is called upon to look up to you as its head; how would they like to look up to a Marchesa Baldara taken, not even from the bourgeoisie, but from the *canaille* quarrymen of Maiano?"

"Judge others by yourself, Gian! Would you not see every excuse in such grace, such beauty! Are others blind?"

"I grant," said Giovanni, lighting a fusee, "that Colomba is not only beautiful—she is more; she is magnificent! But stop, stop, my friend, let me speak. To you she is soft as a dove, tender as a young kid, but look at her great black eyes! Look at the shape of that jaw and brow! She is no dove; that girl has within her, as yet undeveloped, the most fiery passions of the south. She is gentle now; she has it in her to become a fury, a tigress."

"The tigress crouches beneath my hand!" said Livio.

He was little more than a boy; the thought that the will of this powerful nature would bow to his, and acknowledge his rule, was sweet to him as her love.

"Yes, now. But when she is your wife, will it be so? Boy, boy, you are younger than I am, you do not know what the tyranny of a woman can be; you do not know what wealth and rank and diamonds develop in the breast of the canaille."

"Remember that you speak of the woman who is to be my wife!" cried Livio angrily.

"Can nothing stop this madness? Oh, Livio, think of your mother, your calm, noble mother. Compare her for one moment to Colomba! No, no, foolish boy. I do not deny her magnificent beauty, but look at the swing of her carriage, her hands brown with toil, the rough *abandon* of her manner. What more can I say? Can you fancy your wife sitting on the wall, one hand on her hip, the other holding a vast slice of black bread from which she bites fiercely, and converses as she bites? This the daughter you offer to your stately mother?"

"My mother will understand."

Giovanni shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"Look!" cried Livio. "A lily is lovely, white and tall and stately, a great lady among flowers; but this also is beautiful!"—and he held up a branch on which scarlet japonica flowers grew in a thick glowing cluster. "Who dreams for a moment of comparing the two?" he cried. "My friend, you talk nonsense!"

"Can she read or write?"

The question was very abrupt. Livio changed colour. "You are unfair!" he said angrily. "Why ask such a question? Can any of the peasants read or write?"

"Ah!"

"These are trifles; she can learn."

"But will she learn?" asked Gian. "Does not her worn-out old mother in the torn shawl and ragged petticoat complain that Colomba loves nothing in the world but to sit idle in the sun, or lie in the long grass with the sweet-sour *nespoli* to bite in her strong white teeth."

"Do you expect such as she is to work? To drive the mules and harness them with her own hands as the women here do?"

"There are spinning-wheels."

"Which she loathes," cried Livio. "Of what possible use is the

coarse linen they would have her wear, when all that is fairest and best is not good enough for her—and she knows it."

"Ah! Is that a disposition that will go through the drudgery of learning to read and write? Does she care for any more gentle occupation? Does she dress the altar with wreaths? Does she keep the great vases of flowers fresh before the shrine of our Lady at the cross-roads?"

"No; Maddalena does that," returned Livio.

"Maddalena is a gentle, homely woman, very unlike her sister."

"Unlike! I should think so. No one could suppose them sisters."

"And your ragged mother-in-law, Livio mine?"

Livio leapt to his feet; he paced up and down the room with irritated angry steps. Giovanni fancied he was making an impression upon him; he went up to him quickly with outstretched hands.

"Livio," he said, "my boy, do not commit this folly. Give up this marriage, it will destroy you utterly. At least, oh, for my sake, for your mother's sake, give it up now. Come home with me. Let us go at once, at least you will then have time to think."

Livio tossed off his hands with such force that the hot colour rushed into his cheeks.

"I will not quarrel with you," he said. "I will have patience. No brother was ever so dearly loved as you are by me, and it is my fault, through this hateful accident, that this terrible thing has arisen. See, Livio; I implore you to listen; I only plead for time. Come away with me. In three months' time, or less, we will return, if you still wish it, with calmer, clearer judgment. I do not ask much. Come!"

"You ask too much. My word is pledged, our wedding is to be on Sunday."

"On Sunday! Great Heaven; it is then fixed?"

"Irrevocably."

"Then I shall leave you."

"Leave me?"

Livio faltered a little, a quick strange desolated feeling came rushing over him. His friend would leave him; he would be all alone in this curious new world, so utterly out of his own natural element, so curiously uneasy; a fool's paradise, into which, now and then, would come a gleam of illumination which betrayed the precipice on the brink of which he stood!

The tone of his exclamation struck his friend with a pang, but he would not yield.

"I cannot help it," he said. "I will not stay to witness such a suicide—such a mad act of folly."

"Then you can go."

Giovanni went to a corner of the room and began rapidly to pack his knapsack.

"My foot is not strong enough to walk far," he said. "I must

take the diligence; it will be here in a quarter of an hour. I have no time to lose."

Livio sat on the table swinging his legs; he would not again ask his friend to stay. But he was very young; there was a fulness in his throat and sharp burning in his eyelids.

"You will not forget, Livio, that our leave of absence is up in a fortnight; you must be at Pisa to report yourself on that day."

"I shall be there."

"As you marry without permission from the colonel, doubtless you will not bring your wife to Pisa?"

"No," he answered shortly.

"So; I will not ask your plans. I shall see your mother in Florence. Have you any message to send?"

"None."

"Then, good-bye. I hear the diligence horn."

"Good-bye."

Giovanni did not lower himself to say farewell more affectionately; but his face was quivering.

He went out into the little badly-paved steep street. The diligence had drawn up at the door. A woman, with bare arms akimbo on her hips, stood with a broad smile on her lips watching the driver as he tossed down his throat a tumbler of sour red wine. It was Maddalena, Colomba's sister.

Giovanni took his seat in the banquette. Suddenly Livio came up quickly and held out his hands.

"Gian!" he said, looking up at him with his big soft brown eyes, full of wistful pleading.

"Good-bye, my boy," said Giovanni huskily.

"You will not wish me well?"

He shook his head, and Livio impetuously drew away his hands and stood back. The driver cracked his whip.

"Buon viaggio! buon viaggio!" shouted Maddalena, as the little carriage went swinging and clattering down the street.

Giovanni was sitting with clenched teeth and tears in his kindly blue eyes.

"I will save him in spite of himself," he muttered. "If I can get his leave of absence curtailed I will have him safe in barracks at Pisa before his wedding-day. But, oh, for time! For only a few days more!"

He stamped so violently that the driver looked back in amazement.

"Bah! it is only the cramp," he said quickly.

At that moment a ringing laugh broke on his ear, and a sudden shower of scarlet blossoms rained upon him. He bent forward; Colomba was standing by the roadside with her arm round the neck of a tall brown mule. She had wreathed its head with the red flowers, and now she flung all that she had left straight at the young

soldier. She knew he was no friend to her, and she was glad that he was going. She flung the flowers sharply, and she shouted, "Buon viaggio!" with a high shrill voice, while under her breath she uttered one of the quick imprecations of her days.

CHAPTER II.

THE setting sun was pouring its hot glow of golden colour over the quarries of Maiano, turning the deep valley into a mysterious lake of lurid mist, through which loomed, black and strong, the great black cross which crowned the wide-spreading burial-ground.

The road leading up to the village wound along the hill-side in long zig-zags. It was bounded by a low stone wall, from which the precipice fell away sheer down some thousands of feet.

On this low parapet, with her feet dangling, sat Colomba Bondi, the beauty of Maiano. By her side, leaning against the stem of a dark-foliaged carrouba-tree, stood her betrothed, twisting a bunch of field tulips in his hands.

The girl's beauty was splendid, almost startling; her great dark eyes had in them a gleam of light, the rich crimson-colour mantled in her cheek. The coils of her magnificent hair were of fine texture, and black as jet; they were twisted high on her head, showing the powerful moulding of the grand throat.

She sat listening and looking up at the figure beside her. He was a strange contrast to her. Beautiful in a different way; above the middle height; slender, with the Italian's clear olive-colouring, his thick hair and silk moustache very dark, the large soft eyes brown and gentle—in every feature, in every movement, grace and refinement.

The sharp colour-contrasts: the dark carrouba foliage, the white road, the flowers and tangled brushwood which clothed the steep hill-sides, the liquid radiance of golden mist floating in the valleys below: all were blended into the sunset glow.

They were happy. Livio was just twenty-one; Colomba but seventeen. They loved each other, and the morrow would be their wedding-day.

"To-morrow, my love! my beautiful!"

"Ah, to-morrow!" cried the girl, thrusting away from her his outstretched hand. "But what is the use of to-morrow when you must go so soon, so very soon? I hate soldiers."

"But I must serve my time; you know that. There is no escape; patience, sweetheart."

"I wish you had never come," she cried fiercely.

"Colomba!"

"I wish it! I wish it!"

"You are cruel; what do you mean?"

"Can you not understand? Before you came I was happy. It is

true that we had our little troubles when the times were bad. But bah! that passes; every one else has done what I wished. There are others who would marry me. You are not the only one!"

Livio turned away rather sulkily; the thought of his rustic rivals was not agreeable to him.

"Yes," he said, with a slight shrug of the shoulders. "Pippo, who owns the six mules, one eye, and is fifty at least. Nonno, who has not a penny, but would take you to live with his two sisters-in-law and their families in one house. Bardo, who passes through in the diligence, with his scissors in one hand and a napkin in the other, shaving the community while he proposes to you to share his shop and hold half-a-dozen pomades over their well-soaped chins—bah!"

"Why do you speak so scornfully of my people?" she cried. "Are yours so much better?"

He did not answer.

It was sunset. At this hour, his mother would just be leaving the door of her beautiful house at Santa Chiava, taking her way to the village church. It was the hour of the Angelus. He could almost see her coming out of the great overhanging portico, down the steps, gathering up the long black folds of her gown, throwing a lace scarf round her head, under which the delicate features looked more sweet and refined than ever. Turning from side to side with gracious courtesy, she would speak to the bare-headed peasants who adored her, while their honest faces glowed with pride and love for their great lady. And now she was kneeling in the little church. The last notes of the service died away, while she knelt, as she was wont to do, praying for her absent darling; for her Livio, the boy whom she loved better than her life.

The tears started to his eyes.

"What are you dreaming of?" cried Colomba jealously.

"I was thinking of my mother," said he, boyishly.

"I, for one, think that when one is married the less one has to do with one's mother the better. My mother has worked hard all her life, there is nothing left of her but sharp words. Are we not enough for each other? They will be relieved of our support. Am I not right?"

"The sun sinks fast," said Livio. "Shall we go towards the village?"

"You are in haste. What has come over you, Livio, to-day?"

"Nothing! There is nothing."

"I wish to finish. I have another lover, of whom you know absolutely nothing. Have you heard of Nino Dori?"

"A son of the Priore's, old Dori?"

"No, nephew. Well, have you heard of him?"

Livio passed his hand over his eyes. The fierce kind of aggressive tone in which she spoke to him this evening irritated all his nerves to an uncontrollable degree.

"No; what should I hear?"

"I will tell you. He, Nino Dori, was the playmate of my youth; he and I loved each other. He was not like the rough people here, whom you despise; he was like yourself. He had white hands and a white face, but he is hunchbacked, deformed—not much; just enough to take away his usefulness and make him only fit for an idle city life. When he was twelve years old, the Priore sent him down to Florence, and he went into the shop of Maestro Scappi, in a street called the Borgo San Jacopo, to learn carving and picture-framing. There he has been ever since; but twice a year he comes home. He is quiet, and speaks softly and gently as you do; but he does not look down on Maiano as you do—he loves every stone in the hills, he loves the rough stone-cutters, even the brown mules, and, while his mother lived, one was dear to him, and honoured as his patron saint. He even loves my mother, and is kind to her, and softens her with his strange city ways. You should see his carving! The golden fruits and flowers. Ah, he has talent, our Nino!"

Livio flushed. "You speak warmly, Colomba," he said, with a sudden sharp pang of jealousy. "You do not love this man?"

"Love him! Ah, that is a different thing. Look you, Livio mine—always, all through my life I have been discontented with my lot. I did not know what I missed, but how could I be happy? What is there to make me happy, or even content, in this poor and miserable fight with the stones of the mountains for a mean subsistence? If I had never tasted white bread, or set my teeth in tasty city sweetmeats, I might still have delighted in our poor food; but I found out that our black bread was coarser, and the wine harsh and sour. Twice a year Nino came up the hill-side with wonderful golden carvings in his wallet, sweet cakes and candied fruits for me, soft looks in his mind's eye, sweet words on his tongue. Love him? Till I saw you, I loved none other in this rough, odd world!"

"And now?"

"Now?"

She bent down and knelt beside him, she looked up at him with softened eyes. All the strange irritating contrasts of her life seemed to soften, mellowed by the glow of love.

"Now?" he repeated.

"Now! Heaven forgive me! All thought of Nino has passed away. I cannot even think of how it will be when he comes home and finds that I am gone, and that it is all over for him."

"Then he hoped, poor fellow, he also——"

"I tell you it is over!" she exclaimed, leaping to her feet. "And when I think of him, I wish that the day had never dawned on which you and your hard, cruel friend came on the hills together, and brought torment, and storms, and joy, into our quiet lives. But when I think of you I say to myself, the torment, and storms, and unrest are worth while, for I have you—and I love you!"

He threw his arms round her, and her wonderful eyes looked up into his. The red sun dipped down out of the world, leaving pale touches of soft light on the distant summits of the hills. A sudden chill breeze swept through the valley. Livio flung away the faded flowers in his hand, home they went together, side by side. The bells were swinging in the village church, sending with sharp, clashing music an echo from hill to hill.

Far away, Livio's mother knelt on, while all other worshippers had gone. The red altar-lights glared as the darkness gathered. She was praying—praying with heart and soul and yearning tears, for her only son—and to-morrow was his wedding-day!

CHAPTER III.

"FASTER! faster! I have told you I will give you two napoleons if you reach Maiano before ten o'clock."

"I can go no faster, Signore! See how the sweat pours from the coats of my horses. The hill is steep!"

"I can walk no more!" exclaimed Giovanni Montana, in an agony. "If I do move my foot will be worse than ever. What shall I do?"

"I will do my best," said the driver sullenly. "But two napoleons will not replace my horses if I kill them, and you see yourself they are doing their utmost."

He shouted and cracked his whip, and the horses struggled and floundered on.

"You see yourself!" said the man deprecatingly.

"I see," said Giovanni. A feeling of cold despair came over him; he would be too late to save his friend.

In his pocket he carried an order from their colonel, an immediate recall for both. They must present themselves at Pisa that very day, without an hour's delay.

The difficulty that Giovanni had had in procuring this order had caused this, to him, maddening delay. The colonel had been away, paying a visit to Sant' Andrea, staying with Livio's mother, Donna Christina Baldara, and his uncle Don Giacopo.

Giovanni could not at once find out where he was, and two days were lost. When he had ascertained it, he flew to Santa Chiava and begged for a private interview with his colonel. The colonel was possessed by a spirit of curiosity. He did not like to recall Livio, simply acting on Giovanni's assertion that it was necessary; he wanted to know the reason why. Giovanni was obliged to tell him at last that his young soldier was on the brink of committing the maddest act of his life—of making a terrible *mésalliance*. Then, indeed, the colonel awoke to the necessity of the case, agreed with Montana that not a

moment was to be lost, and even authorised him to put his friend under arrest, should he hesitate to obey.

But it was Sunday morning before, in spite of his utmost speed, he approached Maiano. Montana sat back in his light open carriage, biting his lips, clenching his hands, only constraining himself by the strongest effort not to give vent to the agony of his impatience.

The poor tired horses toiled on, the driver cracked his whip and shouted, slowly they surmounted one steep zigzag after another. They made the last turn. The village lay before them bathed in sunshine, the white dust flew round them in choking clouds, everything was very still.

"Not a soul to be seen! *Diamine!* what is the meaning of it all?" exclaimed the driver, as he drew up his horses before the door of the well-known inn.

The tired beasts let their heads fall almost to the ground; the steam rising from their poor trembling bodies filled the air. A very old woman hobbled to the door and looked out.

"*Santi Apostoli,*" she cried shrilly, "but you must look out for yourselves! All the world is at church, and I am past work—I, that am as old as the Priore's grandmother, *via!*"

"At church!" cried the driver, looking up at the clock. "But high mass must be over now."

"But we have a marriage to-day—a grand festa! The beauty of Maiano! He! he! I also was the beauty of Maiano once; but who would think it now? Are you ill, Signore? You look as if the Jettatura had been thrown on you—he!"

"Has the marriage begun?" asked Montana, white as a sheet.

"See! it is just over. Ah! what a beautiful sight! That is fine—that is splendid!"

As she spoke the western doors of the little church were thrown open, and a gay party began to pour out upon the steps; overhead came a sudden clash of bells, within the organ pealed, the strong sweet smell of incense poured out on to the outer air.

Down the steps they came, all the inhabitants of the village gaily clad in the brightest colours of the rainbow, talking, laughing, playing with bunches and wreaths of flowers. Then, as Montana bent forward with strained eyes to see, the bride and bridegroom came forth and stood for a moment in the doorway looking down on the brilliant scene. Colomba was dressed in a gown of some deep brown hue, a small scarlet silk shawl round her shoulders resting on the snowy whiteness of her linen skirt; she wore her vezzo, or bridal portion, large rows of roughly-shapen pearls, barbaric as her savage beauty.

She first perceived Giovanni.

He saw her touch Livio's arm and draw his attention to himself. He almost fancied that he could hear her words: "See, your proud friend has come back after all!"

In one bound Livio left his bride, his wedding-guests, at the church door, and came running forward with outstretched hands and a joyous cry. "Gian, Gian, you have come back after all!"

He could not prevent the hot tears from rushing to his eyes at the warmth of that boyish greeting. If he had indeed arrived too late, he felt that it was almost a pity that Livio should be so happy to see him, that his leap toward him had been so full of ecstasy.

"Yes, I have come back," he said hoarsely, "and I suppose I am too late—it is done?"

"Yes, it is done," cried Livio, drawing away his hands. "I see I am mistaken. I thought you had remembered our old affection, and had come back to complete my happiness."

Giovanni turned a little away. "I should like to speak to your bride," he said.

Livio hesitated. "She has no love for you," he said. "The dislike is not all on your side, my friend."

"Ah well, perhaps it is natural. But now——"

"True, it is different now. Colomba will see that. Yes, yes, you will be friends now. Oh, Gian, Gian, how I have missed you! Alone up here in this hole after your departure, the time seemed——"

He stopped himself abruptly.

"Poor boy!" cried Gian.

The quiet tone stung Livio. "Of course," he cried hastily, "one could not expect to find any congenial companion except the one; my pearl in the ocean, my flower among the wild field-weeds."

Giovanni looked up. When Livio left her, Colomba stood alone for a moment in the church door, a thunder-cloud on her brow; then she moved away, came down a few of the steps, and joined some groups of gaily-dressed girls, who surrounded her with eager chatter. Her loud ringing laugh reached their ears even when they stood by the inn.

"I must go; I must return to her," said Livio. "My beautiful wife is there waiting for me. I will come to you to the inn later in the day, my Gian."

"Stay!" exclaimed Giovanni hastily. "I forgot. Livio, I have brought news for you—there is not a moment to lose."

Livio turned pale. "News—not of my mother?" he exclaimed.

"No, no—come with me into the parlour; indeed you must not refuse—it is urgent."

Colomba, looking down, saw her young husband put his arm into his friend's, and both disappeared within the arched doorway of the inn.

Some of the girls began to giggle, Colomba looked furious. "They have business," she said scornfully. "They have affairs rather larger than your lovers, who have no further cares when the blasting goes straight."

"Nevertheless," cried one girl shrilly, "our lovers do not attend to business on the wedding-day."

"Bah, we are not as you are!" she cried.

"There are some drawbacks to marriage with gentlemen, nevertheless."

Colomba made no answer. She sat down on a stone bench under the shadow of the church, with the girls clustering round her; her eyes were flaming, her lips and cheeks scarlet; with one foot she beat angrily on the ground.

"If I am to be neglected like this," she thought, "why did he marry me? But I am his wife; the knot is tied; I will soon teach him how I am to be treated!"

Half an hour passed, the girls got tired of standing about on the church steps, laughing and talking and jeering at Colomba. She also was fiercely, restlessly tired of her position, and a feeling of alarm that she could not control began to steal over her.

"Let us all go down to the inn and find out what is going on!" cried one of the girls.

Colomba shook her head. She would gladly have done so but for the restraint of the presence of Giovanni Montana. Of him she had always felt an extreme dislike and dread, arising from the intuitive feeling that he was her enemy; that from the moment that her young lover had cast on her the look of that intense admiration that had so soon ripened into love, his friend had entered into a silent but powerful antagonism to her power.

"Then let us ask the Signor Priore to interfere," said Maddalena suddenly; and without waiting for permission she quickly re-entered the church.

Maddalena's housewifely mind was occupied with the fact that a little feast was spread in the Bondis' house, and it ought to be eaten before the coffee got cold and the ciambellas became tough and flat.

Colomba looked after her sister with sombre eyes; but she was relieved that some one was going to take some steps at last. The girls yawned and laughed and exhausted all forms of conjecture.

Presently the Priore came down the steps. He was a gentle, elderly man, with a quiet, careworn face. He looked very grave—so grave that Colomba frowned and bit her lips angrily. She knew that he had not approved of this marriage; that he had remonstrated both with her bridegroom and her father and mother, though he had never spoken of it to herself.

He gave her a slight salutation, gently waving his hand as he passed, and went straight down to the inn.

CHAPTER IV.

"Why do you look so grave? What on earth is it that you have to tell me?" cried Livio, catching hold of his friend's arm and dragging him into the little bare sitting-room in which they had spent so many days together.

"Livio, tell me—the marriage is really over?"

"Must I repeat it? You saw us come out of church."

"The civil ceremony?"

"This afternoon. We go up to San Pietro, you know. There is no mayor here."

"Ah!"

He paused a moment, as if lost in thought. Livio grew impatient.

"If you have nothing more than this to say," he said, "I told you I must go back to my bride."

"Have patience with me," said Giovanni, the tears suddenly rushing to his eyes, for a misgiving crossed his mind that what he was about to say might cause him to forfeit the friendship he valued so keenly.

"Have patience! Remember that I have strained every nerve to arrive in time. It is not my fault that this has happened."

"But what is it? You speak in riddles."

"Our recall—see! It reached me yesterday morning. We must be at Pisa this evening."

"This evening? Impossible! Is this your doing?"—he seized Giovanni's arm with such force that he winced with pain.

"My doing that I am too late? How can you think it? I have strained every nerve to be in time."

"But what is the reason of this sudden recall? Is the Colonel gone mad? Our leave does not end this month."

"The King goes to Genoa. I can give no other reason. The Colonel's orders are indisputable; they include us both."

Livio paced up and down the room. "But what am I to do?" he exclaimed. "What explanation can I give? I will not go! The Colonel will understand the exceptional case."

"But," said Giovanni unhesitatingly, "you have not applied for leave to marry. Can you plead your marriage?"

Livio flung himself into a chair with a groan.

"Hedged in on every side!" he exclaimed. "What on earth am I to do?"

"I am afraid," began Giovanni pityingly, "that there is no alternative. We must obey."

"Can you not go and explain? Can you do nothing to help me?"

"I did what I could, my boy—I tried to get here before it was too late; but in vain."

"I will not go!"

"But think of the consequences! Remember the sternness of our Colonel. It will mean arrest. Shall you be better off then?"

"At least the marriage ceremonies will be complete; to leave the civil contract unsigned will be to insult my bride and her people."

"But will the Colonel be satisfied with arrest? Come, Livio, you cannot face disgrace."

He started as if he had been shot.

Giovanni went on. "No member of your family has ever been disgraced before. It is impossible to contemplate such a thing. For my part, I would sooner be shot than disobey a recall so urgent as this one. Whatever you decide upon doing, I myself start on my return within an hour. The horses which brought me will then be fairly rested. We shall get to Pisa by the six o'clock train from Florence to-night."

"Speak for yourself! It is impossible that I should go. Gian, Gian, it is not a legal marriage until the civil contract is signed."

Giovanni gave a violent start, and turned so pale that Livio saw it even through his own extreme perturbation, and exclaimed, "What is it, Gian?"

"Nothing!"

He leapt to his feet and walked to the window. The window opened on to a small balcony which overhung the valley. It was brilliant with sunshine to-day, the glimmering light so radiant that he put his hand over his dazzled eyes.

"You are very strange," exclaimed Livio almost pettishly. The young fellow was little more than a boy; the situation in which he found himself half-maddened him.

"Strange! How would you have me otherwise?" cried Montana, suddenly turning and striding towards him. "Livio, do you imagine that it does not seem not only strange, but incomprehensible to me, that you, whom I have known all your life and loved as a brother, should shirk the duty of a soldier, and render yourself liable justly to disgraceful punishment? You look as if you did not care; but if you do not, I do. I care that the bond between us must be severed, for I can no longer grasp the hand of a man who is neither more nor less than a deserter about to be drummed out of his regiment!"

"Gian!"

"Nay, your anger affects me not in the least. I must speak the truth, whatever you may say!"

"Gian, do you know what you are saying? You will give me up?"

"Yes, as I would give up anyone else who disgraced his country and his regiment."

"You say this to me?"

It was indeed a bitter moment to Livio Baldara; the conflicting feelings in his breast were almost more than he could bear. The

cost of the *mésalliance* was coming upon him too soon in all its bitterness. He had imagined himself so deeply in love with his peasant-bride that no sacrifice of home, friends, or mode of life would be too great for her sake. And yet, one week alone in this wild mountain village, with no occupation save making love, with no refinements of life about him, no pleasant friends' society, had half-awakened him from his dream. He had consoled himself with his belief in her power of raising herself; he had even pictured to himself his mother educating his beautiful savage, softening, refining, teaching her, and now, suddenly, rudely, the moment of decision came upon him. The sacrifice was still incomplete, he must give up his dearest friend, his honour as a gentleman, his place among his country's soldiers, all for her sake, or——

"Heaven help me!" he cried aloud. "Gian, I am very miserable."

His head fell on his hands, while burning tears forced themselves through his fingers.

"My dear, dear fellow," cried Giovanni, softened at once, "do not think that I am not sorry for you. Indeed, my heart aches; but oh, Livio my boy, what can I say? Must you sacrifice your whole career—all that is worth living for on earth?"

"Gian, she is my wife!"

"I know"—he was only just able to prevent himself from adding, "Worse luck that it should be so!" in time—"I know, Livio; I know that it is too late to remedy that. But listen. You can surely come back later. She perhaps is herself wise enough to see that your honour is at stake. You surely do not do justice to her common-sense."

Livio only shook his head.

Giovanni felt half wild; what could he say or do to persuade his friend?

At that moment the door was pushed gently open and the Priore came in.

The good man gave an involuntary start when he saw the two friends—the bridegroom, with his face buried in his hands, the other pacing nervously up and down, both evidently in a condition of extreme agitation.

"Forgive me if I intrude, gentlemen," said the village priest courteously; "but the question is urgent. Sir," turning to Livio, "your young bride is in some distress; there is confusion and dismay among your guests. I would urge you to put an end to this trouble, but that I am greatly afraid that you have just received some bad news."

"Bad news, indeed!" exclaimed Livio, raising his head. "Gian, explain to the Priore. Let him decide for me. I will abide by his decision."

"No, no!" exclaimed Montana, wholly distrusting the gentle,

peasant-bred priest, angrily asking himself what such an one would know about the honour binding the actions of a gentleman.

"I tell you we must make an end of this," cried Livio, "or it will drive me mad. See, then, Signor Priore. Here is my friend who has come up the mountains travelling at his utmost speed to bring me this —an immediate recall to our regimental duties, our leave cancelled."

The Priore slowly adjusted his spectacles. "I hardly understand," he began.

"The matter is simple enough," said Giovanni hastily. "You, sir, who understand in its fullest sense the necessity of discipline, can surely grasp the fact that a soldier must obey his chief."

"Undoubtedly you do me no less than justice."

There was such a simple dignity in the Priore's manner that Giovanni felt ashamed of himself.

"I beg your pardon," he said quickly. "Let me explain clearly. For some reason best known to himself our Colonel orders us to report ourselves at Pisa this very night."

"So soon?"

"You see that our departure should not be delayed."

"This is most unfortunate! The civil contract is not yet signed."

"Is that so important, Signor Priore?" exclaimed Giovanni. "Many of your cloth have considered it unnecessary. Anyhow, it can be postponed."

"Perhaps you are right," said the Priore slowly.

"My opinion as to its necessity is of small importance; it is the law. Our friend here knows that it must be carried out. Meanwhile——"

"Then I am to go? Who is to tell Colomba?"

Ah, yes, that was the question! The Priore shrank back; Giovanni's face turned a shade paler.

"I must tell her myself."

Livio rose to his feet, pushing back his hair; he looked so white, so sorrowful, that Giovanni bit his lips to conceal his suffering.

Without a word the Priore left the room. They knew for what he had gone, and neither spoke. Livio was bracing himself up for the interview.

Giovanni walked quickly to the door and pushed it open. A little group of people were standing about outside, among them the driver of his carriage. In quick, harsh tones he desired this man to harness his horses at once, and very reluctantly he went off to obey, growling and grumbling over the ill-luck which deprived him of all possible share in the wedding-feast.

Then Giovanni returned to his friend. He had rightly judged that Livio would be anxious, nay, eager to be off at once when his interview with his wife was over, and with a wife so uneducated, so incapable of argument or reasoning, the interview could not possibly be long.

Meanwhile the Priore had gone straight to the seat on which Colomba was still sitting. She rose to her feet when she saw him approach, the crimson colour deepening in her cheeks.

The girls and women eagerly clustered round him, all asking questions at once. Colomba alone asked no questions, only her great dark eyes grew wide with a sudden, sharp anxiety.

The Priore looked sad and disturbed; it was very evident that he was the bearer of bad news.

"But what is it?" cried the women. "Is the bridegroom taken ill? Has his friend bewitched him? What can you tell us?"

The Priore waved his hands. "Peace, peace, my friends!" he exclaimed. "Colomba, this concerns you only."

She drew up her tall figure and looked straight into his eyes.

"Do you bring a message from my husband?" she said.

The good Priore wiped his brow. "Yes—and no," he answered. "His friend Signor Giovanni has brought him bad news—news that will annoy us all."

"Why does he not come and tell me?" said Colomba haughtily.

"He has asked me to fetch you. He wished to tell you himself."

There was a little murmur among the women.

"Poor fellow! Poor dear! And to receive bad news on his wedding-day! Madonna help him! It is a pity!"

But there was no look of softening in Colomba's face.

"He should not have left me like this!" she said harshly. "A wife's place is by her husband's side when he is in trouble."

"Then come to him at once," said the Priore hastily, for at the inn-door he saw signs of approaching departure; the driver was drawing out his ricketty old carriage from the archway under which it had been sheltered.

Colomba said no more. She looked neither to right nor left, but went straight through, her companions following her guide.

"Courage, Livio, courage!" exclaimed his friend, for at the sound of approaching footsteps Livio leapt to his feet.

He made no answer. His eyes were fixed on the door, and his face grew white and drawn as the Priore drew it open and admitted Colomba.

He advanced a few steps to meet her, and then stood still. "Great Heaven! how shall I tell her!" he exclaimed.

Giovanni came forward, bowing with a respect he had never before shown to his friend's bride.

"Signora," he said, "I have the misfortune of being the bearer of bad news."

"My husband can speak for himself," answered Colomba, turning from him with a grand movement of supreme contempt.

Giovanni drew back; he stood by the window, and the Priore joined him there. Giovanni felt bitterly that it was no longer in his power to help his friend. At that moment a feeling of bitter hatred

to this woman who had destroyed Livio's life surged up in his breast. It would be a tug of war between them ; one or the other would gain the victory.

"Colomba!" cried the poor young fellow, advancing and putting his arm round her to draw her close to him. "My wife, my love! how can I tell you. There is no alternative, no choice ; we must part, and at once."

She drew herself away from him. "For ever?" she exclaimed hoarsely.

"For ever? What are you thinking of? Heaven forbid. What could part us now for ever? Are you not my wife? No, no ; only for a time, a little time, that I may make explanations, get leave. In a few days, a week at the outside, I shall return."

"Very well," she said coldly. "I suppose your friend's reasons are urgent."

"Not urgent, but imperative. I am a soldier ; this comes from my colonel. I have not a moment to lose."

"And what results if you disobey?"

"Disgrace."

"That is all!"

Again he attempted to take her hand ; again she repulsed him, fierce pride was blazing in her flashing eyes.

"Go!" she exclaimed. "I would not lift a finger to prevent your departure."

"Cola, you are hard! you are cruel!"

She looked at him, her breast heaving ; in another moment she felt that she should break down into wild sobbing. The reason he gave seemed to her absurd, perfectly inadequate ; with all her strong, undisciplined nature, this strange girl loved her young husband, and the thought that flashed across her that his love for her did not equal hers for him caused her such sharp agony that it was all she could do not to utter the sharp cry which swelled her throat to suffocation.

"It is only for a little while—a few days. If necessary, I will buy my discharge ; not even the service shall keep me from my wife. And now, you will forgive me, my beloved, my heart's love?"

But she drew away ; she would not even let him kiss her hand.

Giovanni saw his friend's almost unbearable distress ; he would have gone forward, but the Priore gently laid a detaining hand on his arm. They turned away not to witness Livio's grief, not to hear his passionate pleading that Colomba would forgive, would take his hand at least, would believe in his faithful, unutterable love.

There was a loud rattling commotion outside. Some one shouted out that the carriage was ready. Only too thankful to cut short this distressing scene, Giovanni sprang forward, and the Priore slowly advanced.

Colomba still stood motionless ; the passion of feeling choked her utterance ; her breast heaved with long-drawn breaths, impotent fury

and resentment combatted with fierce love. Once she raised her arms as if she would allow him to clasp her to his heart; then suddenly she drew back, and with all her strength she struck him on the breast. The blow was so violent and unexpected that Livio staggered back; he covered his face with his hands.

He was not conscious that the Priore came forward and put his cold hand on Colomba's shoulder—a touch so quiet and sobering that she let him lead her away.

Giovanni said, in a studiously matter-of-fact voice, that the carriage was ready, and Livio followed him out and took his place.

The driver cracked his whip; there was a jingling of little bells, and they were off.

From all the assembled villagers, now gathered together in angry groups, rose up a sort of hooting shout, mingled with some laughter and jeers. At the sound, Colomba raised her head. She was alone with the Priore.

"Do you hear?" she said fiercely. "Already—even to-day—the mockery has begun."

He began some phrase about explanations; but she cut him short.

"Let me alone," she said.

She went out on to the balcony with a low moan, and crouched down, leaning her burning brow against the iron railings.

CHAPTER V.

THE great villa of Santa Chiava was one of the most beautiful of the large country houses in the Val d'Arno. It lay surrounded by wide stretches of olive woods and dark cyprus groves. The house was half encircled by a wide verandah or loggia, supported on pillars; stone terraces with balustrades descended by flights of shallow steps to the level of the wide gardens. The walks and alleys in those gardens were sheltered by flowering shrubs, groups of arbutus and sweet-scented bay. They were decorated with marble statues and bright fanciful fountains dancing in the sunshine, the marble basins overgrown with tangled water-lilies, and alive with the harsh croak of frogs.

The summer was at its height. It was the month of August. All the sun-blinds were drawn; light curtains of fresh striped yellow and white linen were draped round the loggias; every window was closed to exclude the hot summer air and preserve the coolness within.

Gian Montana, dressed in white linen from head to foot, stepped indoors from the burning heat and was immediately conscious of a delicious feeling of fresh coolness; it seemed the coolness of a cellar or vault, so great was the force of the contrast.

It was a very large salon in which he found himself; the walls were hung with the silver-green silk so peculiarly becoming a background to the many pictures with which they were covered. There were family portraits, landscapes, one or two fine Claudes, one or two Guardis, a great canvas of the rich Venetian school, and, in strong contrast, two exquisite Philippo Lippis. The pictures were some good, some indifferent, some really bad.

The floor was of polished marble, reflecting the heavy gilt furniture and the grand old marriage-chests, gorgeous in splendid gilding, and paintings of gay processions adorning them. All was in semi-darkness; Gian at first could distinguish nothing; he came in dazzled by the brilliancy outside.

He had hardly grown accustomed to the obscurity when the heavy tapestry portières at the far end of the room were pushed aside, and a young fair girl came running to meet him with eager outstretched hands.

"Gian! Gian! he is better—he is sensible!" she exclaimed.

"Thank God—at last!" cried Giovanni. "Oh, Aimée, it has been long!"

"He is better; Lorta Morello hopes at last. My dear Aunt Christina is happy."

Gian sat down with a long-drawn breath, motioning the bright child before him to follow his example.

She was about fifteen years old, a fair, very sweet-looking child. Aimée de Marselin was the orphan child of Donna Christina's only sister, who had married a Frenchman, and had died in far-distant France, with her last breath commending her little child to her sister's care. The guardianship was shared by a French uncle; he was glad to be spared all personal responsibility, making only one stipulation—that his little niece should be educated in the Convent of Notre Dame d'Anjou; so that, though her home might not be in Italy, she should yet remain in touch with her father's country.

Aimée grew up the darling and favourite of the house, so that her periodical return for the holidays was welcomed by her adopted mother and by the old Count, her brother-in-law, the kind, eccentric bachelor uncle, who spoilt Livio and adored Signora Christina all through life.

Aimée regarded Livio as a brother, and one to be conciliated, who had all a young man's dislike of little girls. But of late, this cool regard had all turned into sharpest fear. For three long, endless months Livio Baldara had been lying at death's door in his beautiful home; for three months fighting with a deadly malaria, his pulse racing at frightful pace, his temperature at such a height, that day after day the doctor shook his head and muttered to himself that it could not last, that the end must be very near.

And all this time, in untiring devotion, his mother nursed him. Giovanni came to him when he could get leave. His colonel was

merciful, knowing what the attachment between the two friends had always been; and when Giovanni was able to come, the poor mother allowed herself some repose. Livio, who, in his state of half delirium, would permit no hand but hers to feed or tend him, would accept Giovanni's services without a murmur; always seeming better and more restful under his care than with any one else.

Donna Christina never lost hope. It never seemed to enter her head that her son might die. She was fighting so valiantly for his life, he must get better; she could not doubt it. But as the days went on, night succeeding day, always the same repetition—the temperature rising to a frightful height at night, down again in the morning—a sort of dull monotony seemed to hang over the sick-room; a monotony full of condensed torture.

The doctor would say to Giovanni, with tears in his eyes: "But what will happen when we lose him, my friend?"

"His mother will not have long to wait," he answered huskily.

The doctor glanced at the figure bending over that restless sick-bed—tall, slender; in the close-fitting blackness of her long gown the great dark eyes daily grew more large and hollow, the thick braids of fine black hair were more plentifully streaked with white. He could only shake his head.

Late that night, when Morello looked at his patient, some instinct warned him that a change was at hand: he kept his carriage and prepared to stay all night. He was a busy man, he could not spare his rest. He went to bed quietly, and was not astonished when, about three o'clock in the morning, a light tap at his door was followed by the summons of the nurse.

In a moment he was ready.

Livio's bed, for the sake of air, had been drawn out into the centre of his large many-windowed room; a gilded sconce above the head, on which was placed a tall ivory crucifix. He lay motionless, breathing very softly.

Donna Christina sat beside him. She looked up, as the doctor came in, with questioning eyes, in which he could read the dawning of despair.

Morello looked very grave, but as he stood there the gravity passed away.

The young Count was terribly changed by his long illness, the thinness of the white hands lying on the coverlet was startling; his face was white as marble, save where the blue veins stood out in strong relief; his eyes were closed.

Dr. Morello looked up. "The temperature has fallen," he said, in a low whisper. "It is far below normal."

His mother started. For the moment for the first time hope had actually died in her breast; now her force and activity revived. For long hours they fought with deadly overpowering weakness. More than once they thought he was gone, the power of swallowing seemed to be

lost, the grey death-like hue deepened on his face; but life is strong in a young vigorous frame of one-and-twenty, and strong and prevailing are a mother's prayers.

When dawn had broken, and the songs of the birds outside began to dispel the stillness of the night, the doctor went to the windows and threw them wide open. A little fresh, cool breeze came in, bearing with it the sweet smell of seringa. It played round the room, passing tenderly over the sick man's hair.

There was a movement; his large dark eyes unclosed. His mother, with her soul bursting with thanksgiving, saw in them the look she had looked for so long in vain; the re-birth of consciousness in their depths, and over his lips came suddenly a very slight smile. The heavy eyelids closed again, the breathing was low and regular.

"He sleeps," said Morello, wiping his brow. "Madame, your son is saved!"

It was about five o'clock in the summer morning that Donna Christina came softly to Aimée's bedside.

The child was asleep, surrounded by the white lacy folds of her mosquito-curtains. She raised herself at the first sound of movement in the room, hushed as it was.

"Good news, Aunt Christina? I see it in your eyes. Is it good news?" she cried.

Her aunt could not speak, she could only bow her head in assent, the large tears were running down her cheeks. She clasped the little, slender figure in her arms and pressed her lips to the sweet fair cheek, while Aimée threw her arms round her, and, in sympathy too fervid for words, sobbed out her joy and gratitude.

Donna Christina could not stay; she hurried back to her boy's bedside; so much depended still on unremitting care and watchfulness.

Aimée, hastily rising and dressing herself, felt life, and joy, and merriment rising up once more in a joyous torrent of indescribable happiness. Aimée had scarcely finished her solitary breakfast, when the sound of wheels made her run to the windows, and thence downstairs to the big salon to greet Giovanni Montana.

Eagerly he questioned her; he grew half-impatient with her because she did not know in what the amelioration consisted. She knew no details, nothing more than the joy and thankfulness of his mother, and Dr. Morello's words to the servants as he left the house an hour before—

"Your young master is saved. God be praised!"

"Have you come to stay, Gian?" said Aimée wistfully. "Aunt Christina ought to rest."

"Yes; I can stay some days. Of course she must rest. I will go to her at once. Oh!" he exclaimed, with a sudden, eager, raising of his head. "What it is to hope again!"

"Have you been so very hopeless?" said the child thoughtfully. "I was not. We prayed so earnestly."

"You were right," he answered. "We must indeed be thankful."

He went away. Little Aimée watched his departure with a longing wish in her gentle, little breast that she could be of some use in some way, however slight, to the dear aunt whom she loved as a mother.

Livio's room was one of a long suite opening into each other on the ground-floor. When Giovanni had first brought him home from Pisa, sinking under the fierce fever which had taken possession of him, he had taken a fancy to this room, and declared that here he could breathe better than in any other in the house, for here were space and air. Giovanni entered this room with the soft tread to which all were accustomed now.

The silence that reigned was intense, so intense that the buzz of an angry fly beating itself against the window-panes sounded almost painfully loud.

At first, Giovanni found it difficult to distinguish objects clearly in the dim light, but, as his eyes became accustomed to the obscurity, he saw Donna Christina sitting by her son's bed. In that attitude, overcome by the fatigue of the last days, she had fallen asleep with her arm under Livio's head.

The nursing-sister, in her large cap and snowy sleeves, was seated near the window. She rose, with a bright smile of congratulation on her kind face, and came towards him.

"Can you not take her place?" she whispered softly. "If she does not rest she will break down, and there will be much to go through yet."

Giovanni started, as a nearer look showed how deep the lines had grown in that white, worn face. He went up to her, and laid a gentle hand on hers.

Donna Christina woke very quietly, without any start that might disturb her son. Giovanni bent forward. "Leave him to me, now," he whispered. "You must rest so as to be ready when he wants you again. Will you not go now?"

Very skilfully he put his own arm into the place of hers, tenderly drawing her away; but when he had taken her place, without disturbing Livio, she was so stiff and worn that she could not rise to her feet. The nurse half led, half carried her away.

Livio slept on, wrapt in the soft, natural sleep that was soothing him back to life.

(*To be continued.*)

A MAN'S REMONSTRANCE.

When full into my life you came,
You spake no word of hope; yet still
Your eyes shed forth a magic flame
That led me captive at your will.

No loyal promise from your tongue
Fell sweetly on my yearning ear;
Yet, when my heart your praise had sung,
Your blushes pledged that such was dear.

Ah! well the music of your heart
You held in hand, my soul to thrill!
But spoken love—with matchless art—
'Twas left to measure at my will.

Yet, was there nothing in your glance
Of love's divine and quenchless flame?
That look which could so well enhance
The charming witchery of your name.

Was there no pledge in those sweet eyes
That dazzled bright beyond eclipse?
Could I but treat with vague surmise
The glowing words from off your lips.

Yet, with it all, you fail me now,
And seal your deed with alien glance,
As if you ne'er inspired a vow
In all the round of circumstance.

Ah! heart that yet may sadly miss
Love's loyalty; say, is it wise
To lead a soul o'er plains of bliss,
Then shut it out from Paradise?

Alexandre Lamont.

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The Argosy

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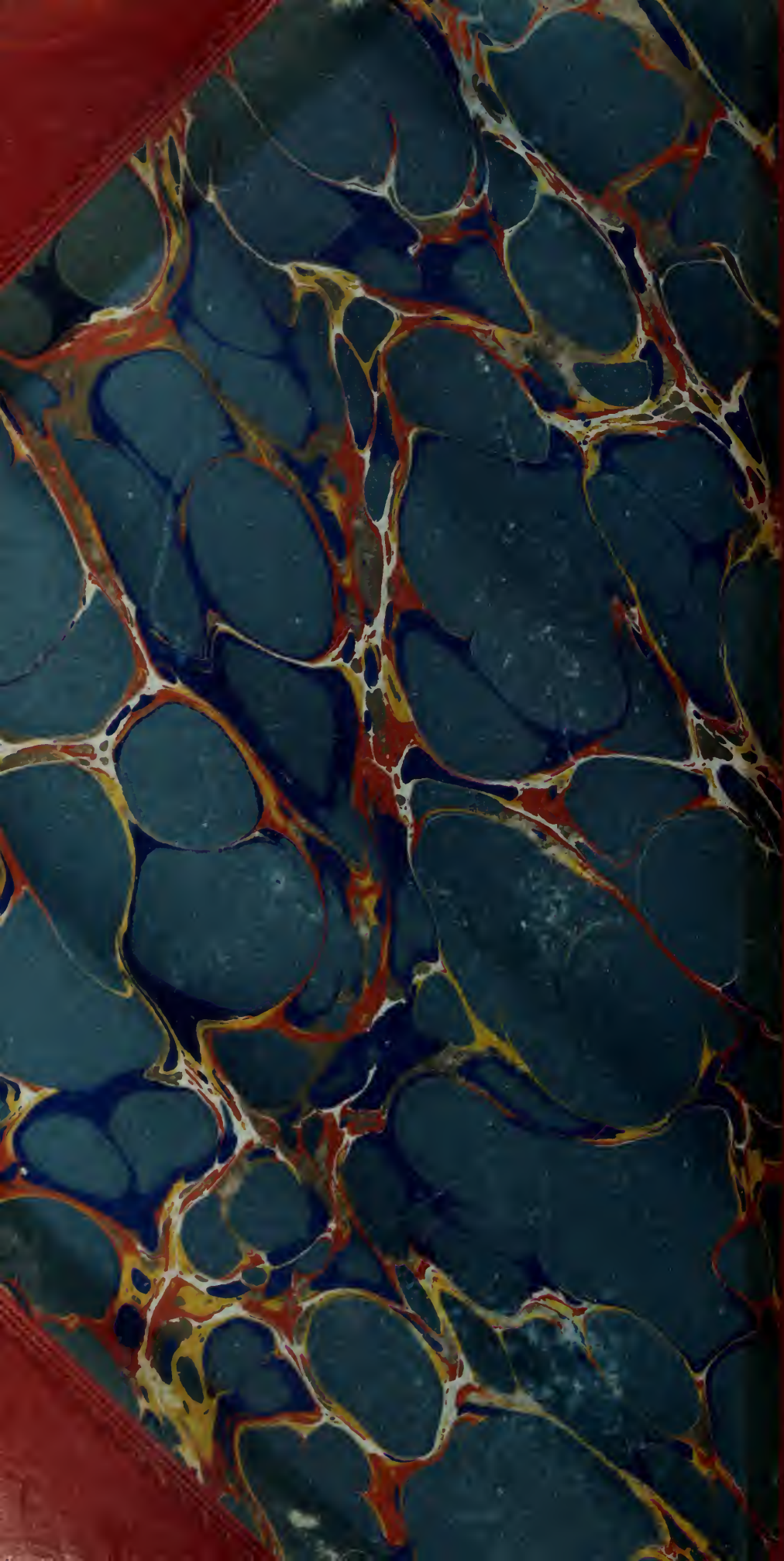
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